

SOME REACTIONS TO CANADIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY
DURING THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN CRISIS

By

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PREFACE

As Canadian participation in international organizations increases there arises an increasing need for studies in the historical development of policy in this area. This study is an attempt to trace Canada's actions during the crucial test of the League of Nations in its efforts to keep peace during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. Canada's behavior in many respects followed a pattern established earlier by various Canadian Governments and statesmen. At times, however, it appeared that the pattern was being broken and precedent set. The factors determining policy and changes in policy and the reaction of the Canadian people are the questions with which this study will be concerned.

While there are several books such as A History of Canadian External Relations by George P. deT. Glazebrook and Canada Looks Abroad by R. A. Mackay and E. B. Rogers which deal generally with Canadian external affairs and others such as Security by Conference by W. A. Riddell and Canada at Geneva by S. M. Eastman which deal with Canadian participation in international organizations there has not been any attempt to relate the formulation of foreign policy to public opinion. Canadian policy during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis seems an excellent case study in this area.

The first chapter is devoted to a brief account of the background of the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia with reference to some of the treaties between the two countries. These relations and treaties were somewhat determined by desires, needs and influences of Britain and France and consequently their part in the background to the dispute is summarized also in this chapter. The second chapter traces the development of Canadian policy toward the League in an attempt to determine the nature of any patterns which might have indicated the probable Canadian reaction in the League during the discussions of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. It is also an account of contributions of the Canadian representatives to the League during the crisis itself. The remainder of the thesis is devoted to an analysis of newspaper editorials on the subject and the public and private opinions expressed by some Canadians who were influential in League activities and political life. League support, support for the British Commonwealth, isolationism and pacifism are the four main categories of opinion considered, though in some cases there was considerable overlapping found. An attempt is also made to examine the relationship of government policy and leadership to public opinion from the first introduction of the problem in the League Assembly through introduction of sanctions, the addition of oil to the sanctions list, the Riddell Incident to the Hoare-Laval pact. There is considerable opportunity for speculation as to what would have been the outcome of the oil sanctions.

proposal had Canada not minimized her support of the proposal but this will be left to other studies.

This study has led the author to the conclusion that foreign policy decisions and lack of decisions in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis were the result of internal political difficulties. Very little leadership or information on the developments of the crisis came from government sources and consequently public opinion was made even more difficult to gauge. The problem which the Liberal Administration faced, then, was at least partially of its own making.

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Under the Supervision of Professor K. W. McNaught

This thesis attempts to determine the role of public opinion in the formulation of Canadian policy during the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis of 1935-36. A survey of newspaper editorials and an examination of some collections of personal papers were used to determine the reaction of the public to Government policy. The major conclusions were that pro-League feeling was very much underestimated when policy was developed and that fear of "splitting the country politically" resulted in a failure of the Government to provide leadership in this area.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN DISPUTE

A. Italo-Ethiopian Relations Prior to 1934

Italy's interest in Ethiopia developed partially as a result of the lateness of Italian unification. The major part of the race for colonies was over, with the Mediterranean area already claimed, as well as most of Asia. Unification of Italy, however, coincided with the opening of the Suez Canal and the consequent new importance of the area around the Red Sea. During the 1880's both Italian traders and the Italian Government began to take an interest in the area and to stake out their claims. By 1890 these claims were extensive enough to establish the colony of Eritrea. The interest and attention of the Italians then turned to the Empire of Ethiopia which had only recently been unified by Menelik II. Between 1890 and 1893 Italian troops pushed southward with the opposition growing gradually stronger. Finally an all-out offensive by the Ethiopians led to the decisive defeat of the Italians at Adowa in 1896. This was of course a great blow to Italian prestige; and the dreams of rebuilding the Roman Empire were temporarily shattered.

The defeat was recognized in the Treaty of Addis Ababa signed on October 26, 1896. Italy recognized "the absolute and unreserved independence of the Ethiopian Empire as a sovereign and independent state".¹ This turned out to be only the first of a series of treaties determining relations between these two countries. A start was immediately made at drawing the boundary between the Italian colonies and Ethiopia. There were a number of treaties signed between 1900 and 1908 which settled, in a fairly friendly atmosphere, various sections of the boundaries between Ethiopia and the two Italian colonies, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

This relatively friendly atmosphere continued to dominate relations between these two countries and in 1923 Ethiopia became a member of the League of Nations through Italian and French sponsorship. The League had begun a survey on the question of slavery and had determined that it existed to some degree in Ethiopia prior to that country's application for membership in the League. As a result this application was given to a special committee to consider. It was decided to accept Ethiopia as a member if she would agree to sign a declaration promising to fulfill her obligations in the League, supply the League Council with any information it requested, and take into consideration any

¹ Canada, Department of External Affairs, Documents Relating to the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict, 1936, p. 22.

recommendations made by the Council.² These terms were accepted by Ethiopia and she became a member. No mention was made of any failure on the part of Ethiopia to fulfill these obligations until Italy began her accusations in 1934.

On August 2, 1928, Italy and Ethiopia signed a Treaty of Amity, Conciliation and Arbitration. In this treaty the two powers promised each other "constant peace and perpetual friendship" (Article 1), and agreed "not to engage, under any pretext, in action calculated to injure or prejudice the independence of the other party" (Article 2) and to develop and promote trade between the two countries (Article 3). They further agreed "to submit to a procedure of conciliation and arbitration, disputes which may arise between them, and which it may not have been possible to settle by ordinary diplomatic methods, without having recourse to armed force" (Article 5).³ At the same time an agreement was signed to make possible the construction of a road from central Ethiopia to Assab, a port in Eritrea--still another step indicating friendly relations between the two countries as well as cooperation in the utilization of the natural resources.

B. Other Treaties of Importance in the Crisis

The crisis was affected also by treaties between Italy, France and Great Britain as well as a treaty between Italy and France. The first treaty of significance in this

² Ibid., p. 24.

³ Ibid., p. 26.

respect was the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 which was intended to provide a friendly basis for a division of spoils in Ethiopia. In addition to promising not to interfere with each other in matters of trade they agreed to cooperate in the use of railways with no country having any particular advantage. They also agreed that it was to their "common interest to maintain intact the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia as determined by the state of affairs at present existing". The agreement goes on to say that this will in no way interfere with the sovereign rights of the Emperor of Ethiopia.⁴

An exchange of notes between Britain and Italy in December 1925 was the basis of still another agreement of importance in the developing situation. These two countries agreed to support each other in obtaining desired concessions from Ethiopia. The British Government was anxious to obtain some type of understanding with regard to the conservation of the waters of Lake Tsana to facilitate irrigation projects along the Nile. The Italian Government on the other hand desired concessions so that a railway could be built from Eritrea to Italian Somaliland. When this exchange of notes was brought to the attention of the Ethiopian Government a protest against this attempted coercion was sent to the League. The communique pointed out that these agreements were made entirely without Ethiopian consultation and only then had the notes been

⁴ Ibid., pp. 32-35.

sent simultaneously by the two governments to Ethiopia. This could not be looked upon as anything but coercion Ethiopia claimed; coercion, incidentally, which no other member of the League would allow to be applied to itself and which was not compatible with "the footing of equality" which was supposed to belong to a nation upon joining the League. Ethiopia also complained of the British recognition of a sphere of influence for Italy. The British Government replied shortly that there had been no intention of coercion and the agreement to exclusive rights of Italy was binding only on Britain and had no effect whatsoever on the government of Ethiopia. A similar note was sent from Rome. Ethiopia then sent a note to the Secretary General of the League accepting these explanations although they were not altogether satisfactory. They requested that all correspondence and documents relating to this controversy be made public by registering and publishing them in the League journals. This was the first significant attempt to get justice through League publicity.⁵

Probably the greatest single factor determining the outcome of the struggle between Italy and the League was Italo-French relations. These were based on the Franco-Italian Agreement of January 7, 1935. One of the major areas of conflict between the two countries lay in the

⁵ Professor A. J. Toynbee makes this point in his account of the British-Italian exchange of notes in Survey of International Affairs, (Oxford; 1930), 1929, pp. 219ff.

African colonial problem with Italy claiming that she had not been treated properly by Britain and France at the conclusion of the World War. A rejuvenated Germany, however, made it desirable for France to overcome or overlook their disagreements in order to direct their attention to the Rhine frontier and German expansion in Austria.

Small territorial concessions were made by France in return for an Italian promise to withdraw troops from the Franco-Italian border. That Italy was satisfied with such small territorial concessions was a surprise to many. A short time later, however, it appeared less surprising, for French support made it possible for Italy to fulfill her ambitions in Ethiopia. This, incidentally, did much for the position of Mussolini and the Fascist Party in Italy.⁶

C. The Walwal Dispute

The first major difficulty to arise between Italy and Ethiopia was what became known as the Walwal incident.⁷ The difficulties began when the Anglo-Ethiopian Joint Commission, determining the boundary between British Somaliland and Ethiopia, arrived at Walwal and "found it to be occupied by an Italian native force". When the Commission withdrew, part of the heavy Ethiopian guard remained.

⁶ The Franco-Italian negotiations and the agreement which ensued are covered by A. J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs 1935, (Oxford: 1936), I, pp. 91-118.

⁷ While there were a number of disputes between Italy and Ethiopia prior to the Walwal incident this was the first one of serious proportions.

On December 5, 1934, an engagement took place between the Italian and Ethiopian troops. There were immediate protests. The Ethiopian Government requested that Article 5 of the 1928 Treaty should be applied so as to provide arbitration in the matter. The Italian Government looked upon it as an unprovoked attack and demanded reparations, apologies, a salute to the Italian flag and punishment of the offenders. Each government of course claimed Walwal as part of its territory. Ethiopia's claim was based on a treaty of 1908 which had determined the boundaries in that area. They further charged that Walwal "like previous incidents is due to the Italian policy of gradual encroachment in an area that is an integral part of Ethiopian territory even according to the official Italian maps".⁸ The Italians claimed that this particular area had not had the frontier demarcated because Ethiopian obstructions had led to difficulties in 1911. They charged also that this was only the most recent "of a lengthy series of attacks carried out . . . in the frontier zone between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia . . .".⁹ It seemed impossible to invoke the arbitration and conciliation clause of the 1928 treaty under these conditions.

⁸ Canada, Department of External Affairs, Op. cit., p. 8.

⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

D. The Dispute Taken to the League

The failure to reach any agreement led the Ethiopian Government to reserve "the right to request that the question be placed on the agenda" of the session beginning on January 11, 1935. It was placed on the agenda on the 15th, but on January 19th, after some "behind the scenes" work by Laval and Eden, the Council was informed by the two governments that an agreement had been reached whereby Article 5 of the 1928 Treaty could be invoked.¹⁰

In March of 1935 a neutral zone was established in the Walwal area to prevent further outbreaks. This was followed by an attempt to set up an arbitration committee. While this ground-work was being laid the Italian Government called up the reserves and placed two infantry divisions on a war footing. All attempts of Ethiopia to get some agreement as to the membership and terms of reference of the arbitration committee were blocked by Italy who, nevertheless, claimed direct negotiations were not as yet at an end. The continuing military preparations of Italy prompted Ethiopia to place the matter before the Secretary General of the League and asked that consideration be given to the guaranteeing of their "territorial integrity and political independence" under Article 10 of the Covenant.

This request was brought to the attention of Italy and, on March 22, Italy indicated a willingness to accept

¹⁰For an account of the work of Laval and Eden in this question see A. J. Toynbee, Op.cit., II, pp. 138-140.

arbitration. Ethiopia, suspicious that this might be just another delay, asked that a time limit of thirty days be placed on the appointment of arbitrators. They also asked for a promise that during the negotiations no further steps would be taken to prepare for war. Ethiopia was unable to get these assurances from Italy and consequently asked that the extraordinary session of the Council, called to discuss Germany's breach of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty, should also discuss the problem of Italo-Ethiopian relations. Ethiopia's request was considered by the extraordinary session but it was decided to leave the question until the regular session in May.¹¹ A similar attitude was taken at the Stresa Conference¹² where no official discussion of the Ethiopian problem took place although informal discussions did take place.

On April 14 Italy sent a note to Ethiopia expressing a desire to go ahead with the appointment of arbitrators to determine the responsibility for the Walwal incident. Ethiopia continued to insist that the terms of reference of the arbitration commission should include the ownership of the Walwal area as well as the responsibility for the

¹¹ The decision to leave the discussion of this subject until the May meeting was apparently to appease Mussolini. For an account of this see A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, p. 149, footnote 1.

¹² For an account of the Stresa Conference see A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., I, pp. 156-161. See also Great Britain, House of Commons Debates, October 22, 1935, for the position taken by Britain at this conference.

incident. Two Italian nationals were then appointed by Italy, while Ethiopia appointed a Frenchman and an American to show their good faith.¹³ Italy objected saying that the non-Italian members should be Ethiopian nationals. The controversy was at this stage when the Council of the League met on May 20.

Britain and France were determined to avoid the discussion of the topic in the session of the Council.¹⁴ An agreement was finally reached through compromises on both sides (the greater ones by Ethiopia) whereby terms of reference were established for the commission. This made it possible to maintain the Stresa Front without, at least technically, deserting the League of Nations. However, the way was left open for Italy to continue her rearmament and war preparations for the time when the rainy season would end. The size of the armaments expenditures and the comments in the Italian press made it very doubtful that the Fascist Government would be able to stop short of war and survive; Britain and France ignored these warnings and publicly accepted Mussolini's statements of good faith.

The Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration began its meeting early in June. On July 5 a decision was reached to suspend the sitting indefinitely because of a complete failure to reach an understanding as to the exact

¹³ A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, p. 150.

¹⁴ Britain and France recognized that the Stresa Front would be broken if the Council debated the situation.

terms of reference. The Frenchman and the American appointed by Ethiopia persisted in the demand that the ownership of Walwal should be considered. Throughout July reports were heard of various proposals by Britain and/or France, to facilitate Italian withdrawal without losing face. Suggestions were made of general territorial concessions as well as the granting of railroad rights to make it possible to establish better railroad communications between the Italian colonies in the area. Ethiopia was left helpless.

During this period of abortive arbitration and negotiations the Ethiopian Government could do little but look on while Italian troops and munitions were accumulating on their borders and the construction of roads, the organization of water supplies and other preparatory work was in full swing in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.¹⁵

At the same time Italy began to make representations to various countries making it known that if these countries continued to ship arms and munitions to Ethiopia it would be considered an unfriendly act by Italy. As a result several countries began restricting shipments to Ethiopia.

Because of the apparent stalemate in negotiations it appeared that the Council would finally have to discuss the whole problem at its July meeting. However, shortly before the meeting, Ethiopia was induced to accept the Italian demand that the ownership of Walwal should not be included for arbitration. Italy accepted the appointment of a fifth

¹⁵ A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, p. 163.

arbitrator and indicated also a willingness to discuss the whole problem, in a meeting with Britain and France, while refusing to send representatives to the League Council if the matter was on the July agenda. The July meeting of the Council was informed by Mr. Eden that the over-all problem of Italo-Ethiopian relations would be discussed at a Three Power meeting and that he would report the progress of this meeting at the next sitting of the Council. Thus Italy had once more avoided having the matter come before the League Council. War preparations continued as the end of the rainy season approached.

The membership of the arbitration committee was completed by the appointment of Monsieur Politis as the fifth arbitrator. Their meetings began on August 17th and an unanimous award was announced on September 3. According to the report it had been revealed that "neither the Italian Government nor its agents on the spot can be held responsible in any way for the actual Walwal incident". The report went on to say that the whole decision of the Ethiopian troops to remain at Walwal, after the Anglo-Ethiopian Commission had departed, might have "given the impression that they had aggressive intentions . . . nevertheless it had not been shown that they can be held responsible for the actual incident".¹⁶ The whole controversy that had been dragging on for months was disposed of by finding no

¹⁶ Quoted in Canada, Department of External Affairs, Op. cit., p. 15.

one guilty. It had, however, served Italy's purpose in providing an excuse and a screen for military preparations while at the same time testing the sincerity of the British and French governments in their League pledges.

The Tripartite Agreement of 1906 provided the excuse for the proposed Three Power talks mentioned above. This seemed to be the last method Italy would be able to find for delaying a discussion of the problem by the League Council. The meeting opened with Britain and France both offering territorial concessions to make possible Italian withdrawal without losing face. They had obtained also the promise of far greater concessions than could logically be hoped for from Ethiopia. The Italian delegate, Baron Aloisi, simply procrastinated and refused to make any statement about what the Italian Government would consider adequate compensation and guarantees. The British and French then drew up proposals of what they believed to be the greatest concessions which could possibly be made. Italy flatly refused to consider this offer and the meeting ended without any real progress.

E. The Dispute Reaches the League

At the September 4 meeting of the League Council the Italo-Ethiopian question was given first place on the agenda. Discussion opened with Anthony Eden's report on the failure of the Three Power Talks of August. Laval, presenting the French view, expressed a desire to continue to play the part of a conciliator, but he indicated that if

this failed France would uphold the Covenant. This was followed by a statement of the Italian position given by Baron Aloisi. He dealt very quickly with the Three Power Talks and the settlement of the Walwal incident--both of which had taken place since the previous meeting of the Council. The largest part of his speech was devoted to a memorandum "setting forth a host of Italian charges against Abyssinia".¹⁷ These were later grouped under three headings by a Committee of the Council. The three headings were as follows:

- (i) Insecurity of the frontiers.
- (ii) Non-fulfillment of the obligations contracted by the Empire on its entry into the League of Nations (i.e. slavery, traffic in arms).
- (iii) Disturbed internal situation which precluded the fulfillment of the terms of the treaties concerning the status of foreigners and makes it impossible to satisfy the economic interests of Italy.¹⁸

The Italian Government listed a large number of cases to illustrate each point. Many of the illustrations were taken from the years before Hailie Selassie had taken control and most of the rest after difficulties had developed between the two countries. The Ethiopian representative pointed out that Italy had now shifted her case because the Walwal incident no longer served her purpose. He begged the

¹⁷ The complete text of this speech appears in The League of Nations, Official Journal, November 1935.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 1223-1225.

Council to take prompt action under Article 15 because Italy had obviously decided to exterminate Ethiopia and this attempt to give his government a bad name was only the first step in the process. On September 6, with the Italian representative abstaining, a Committee of Five from the Council was appointed "to make a general examination of Italo-Ethiopian relations and to seek for a peaceful settlement".

The first step taken by this committee was to ask the Italian and Ethiopian delegates to the League to cooperate with the committee in establishing the facts of the dispute. The Ethiopian delegation and the Government at Addis Ababa both promised cooperation and expressed the greatest desire for the committee to proceed with its work. The Italian delegation on the other hand flatly refused to commit themselves to cooperation while Italian Government sources were advancing no hope for a peaceful settlement. The Committee continued its work until September 18 when they sent notes to the Ethiopian and Italian representatives proposing possible solutions. The suggestion was made that Ethiopia be given international assistance in her attempt at civilizing the northern tribes. They also indicated possible concessions to Italy that could be made by Britain and France or to Ethiopia so that she in turn could make concessions to Italy. Baron Aloisi made it known at Geneva on September 22 that Italy would not consider these offers.

Two days later the Committee of Five adopted a report which announced the failure of their efforts.¹⁹

On September 26 the Council met to receive this report and after it had been read the chairman of the Council suggested that Article XV of the Covenant was now applicable. His suggestion that a report should be drafted by representatives of all the members of the Council, except the parties involved, was accepted. This Committee of Thirteen received two telegrams from the Emperor of Ethiopia promising co-operation and reaffirming his desire for peace. However, the later telegram also informed the Council that the Emperor felt the gravity of the situation necessitated general mobilization and orders had been given to accomplish this. On October 2 Ethiopia reported that her border had been violated. This, Italy denied--but on the following day Italian aeroplanes began bombing Ethiopia and Italy announced that the general mobilization order and the continual raids to which the Italians had been subjected made it necessary for Italy to take this step.

A meeting of the Council was called for October 5 to hear the report of the Committee of Thirteen. It was agreed to delay the vote on this report for two days. The meeting also heard the Italian and Ethiopian representatives restate the position of their respective governments. A Committee of Six was then set up to examine the new situation

¹⁹ Canada, Department of External Affairs, Op. cit., p. 54.

and report to the meeting of the Council on October 7. It was also announced that the President of the Assembly had summoned the Assembly to meet on October 9.

When the Council met two days later they had before them the reports of both committees. The report of the Committee of Six was read first. It began by stating two questions for which they had tried to find the answers.

(1) Does a state of war exist between Italy and Ethiopia?
(2) If so, has the war been resorted to in disregard of Articles 12, 13 and 15 of the Covenant? It then went on to state a number of facts on the basis of which they reached the following conclusions: "After an examination of the facts stated above, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Italian Government has resorted to war in disregard of its covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations".²⁰ The Council then went on to discuss the report of the Committee of Thirteen. A futile attempt was made by Italy to delay the discussion of this report. When the vote was taken the report was unanimously adopted. A similar procedure was followed with the Report of the Committee of Six which was duly voted on and unanimously adopted. The chairman, at the close of the meeting, announced that the reports and the minutes of the meeting would be forwarded to the President of the Assembly.

When discussion began in the Assembly the Italian representative attempted to make the point that a unanimous

²⁰Ibid., p. 66.

decision of the Assembly would be necessary before any action could be taken. He knew full well that Austria, Hungary and Albania would not support any action against Italy.²¹ This view was not upheld. In the discussion which followed in the Assembly the three countries listed above indicated that they would not support sanctions against Italy. Switzerland, although not opposing sanctions, did not give whole-hearted support because this would make it impossible for her to maintain her traditional neutrality. The British representative, Anthony Eden, made a very strong statement in support.

Since it is our duty to take action, it is essential that such action should be prompt. That is the League's responsibility -- a responsibility based on humanity; for we cannot forget that war is at this moment actually in progress.²²

Another interesting and forceful statement made in support of sanctions came from the representative of Haiti. It protested against Mussolini's distinction, in various speeches, between a colonial and a European war.

The precedent which we are going to set up today will be used tomorrow. There are not two truths -- one for Africa and the other for Europe. On either side of the Mediterranean aggression must be defined in the same way. The same bombs, the same shells produce the same effects, and whether the dead or wounded be black or white, the same red blood flows from their wounds.²³

²¹ A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, p. 208.

²² Ibid., p. 211.

²³ Ibid.

The discussion in the Assembly ended on October 11 with the President pointing out that, of the fifty-four members present, fifty had indicated that they approved the application of sanctions in this case.

A coordination Committee was then set up to determine the method to be used in the application of sanctions. This committee included representatives from every country with membership in the Assembly except Ethiopia and Italy. This was too large a Committee for effective action and consequently a "derivative committee" which became known as the Committee of Eighteen was elected. Canada was a member of this committee. The first step taken was to draw up a list of sanctions, fitting into several categories, which were to be applied against Italy by League members. These sanctions included:

- (1) prohibiting the export of arms and munitions to Italy.
- (2) prohibiting loans to Italy or Italian companies.
- (3) prohibiting the export of certain materials used in war i.e. iron Ore, scrap iron, aluminum, nickel, etc.

The suggestion was made by the committee that these proposals be brought into effect by November 18 and include not only the direct export but also the indirect. The Canadian Government along with most of the other member governments took the steps necessary to implement these proposals.

It soon became evident that the sanctions proposed first would not be sufficient and some extension of the

list of commodities denied to Italy would be necessary.²⁴ In this extension there was little reason to expect much initiative from France. After the outbreak of the war French policy was

...to concentrate attention and effort -- after, no less than before the findings which had been made on the seventh of October -- upon attempts at a settlement of the dispute by conciliation, and, with this in view, to confine the application of sanctions to the minimum necessary for "saving face" of the League, without ever going to the length at which the continuing attempts at conciliation might be seriously hampered or might even cease to be any longer possible.²⁵

The British attitude on the other hand seems to have been to frustrate Italy's attempted aggression by means of sanctions. For this purpose the inclusion of oil seemed only logical and the story of the failure to get oil sanctions accepted is the story of the failure of sanctions and of the League as a method of collective security.

The sanctions proposal that included the various commodities was Proposal IV. When it first came under discussion the Spanish delegate supported by Dr. Riddell of Canada pointed out that it was ridiculous to include iron ore and scrap iron on the list and not include iron or steel. The only attempted defense was to say that the list should include only products controlled by the League members. The incompleteness of the list was pointed out again

²⁴ In an interview with Dr. Riddell June 24, 1956, this writer was told that this view was generally accepted in Geneva though there was some disagreement as to what should be added.

²⁵ A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., p. 271.

on November 2 by the Spanish delegate when the committee was considering special cases. The chairman ruled that there was no way of changing the existing list except by adding to it. It was at this point that Dr. Riddell suggested to the Committee of Eighteen that since the earlier list had received acceptance and since it was incomplete "petroleum and its derivatives, coal, iron and steel" should be added to the list. Within a very short space of time replies had been received from ten governments all indicating that they would cooperate. These ten countries had been supplying 74.3% of Italy's oil.²⁶ The only factor which might make it difficult to make oil sanctions effective was the attitude of the United States.

The United States produced 59.1% of the world's supply of oil (though she supplied only 6.3% of Italy's imports) and could conceivably increase oil exports to Italy to the point where Italy would not be affected by the actions of League members. If, however, the United States were to co-operate by limiting oil exports to Italy to the normal amount, Italy would have great difficulty carrying on the war.²⁷ In the early stages of the discussion of oil sanctions both public opinion and government

²⁶ These figures are from the Report of the Committee of Experts Appointed Under Resolution No. II of January 22 - Effectiveness of an Embargo on the Shipment of Oil to Italy.

²⁷ Ibid. This view was also proclaimed by Allan Nevins in "Italy and Sanctions" Current History, April 1936, and A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, pp. 325-359.

statements indicated an excellent possibility of United States cooperation.

Mussolini recognized that the probability that oil sanctions would be imposed was increasing and consequently an attempt was made to put pressure on the Canadian Government by influencing Quebec public opinion. Possibly as a result of this campaign, Ernest Lapointe, Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, made public a statement indicating that the oil sanctions proposal, often branded as Canada's proposal, was drafted and recommended by Dr. Riddell personally as a member of the Committee of Eighteen, and not by official instructions from the Canadian Government.²⁸ This statement Italy used to prove to the world that the Canadian representative had simply been doing the bidding of the British Government. Although the oil sanctions proposal might have been blocked in some other way, there can be little doubt that this action by Canada had some effect in delaying its acceptance until it was too late.

F. The Position Taken by Britain and France during Oil Sanction Discussions

The failure to introduce oil sanctions, when it was considered that it would be effective if the United States cooperated, must be blamed on the governments of Britain, France and Canada. When it was announced that the Committee

²⁸ The full text of this note can be found in Canada, Department of External Affairs, Op. cit., p. 171.

of Eighteen would meet on November 29 to discuss the imposition of oil sanctions, pressure was immediately put on Laval by Italy. A great press campaign developed with the Italian Government suggesting that oil sanctions would be looked upon by Italy as "an unfriendly act". Italy also reported various troop movements and steps toward mobilization. These reports were vague enough so that it was difficult to know whether these troops were being sent to the Franco-Italian border (relatively undefended since the Franco-Italian pact of January 7, 1935) or to the Libyan-British frontier. On November 29 Laval contacted the chairman of the Committee of Eighteen and asked for a postponement of the meeting until December 11. The chairman then contacted the British representative to determine his reaction. Laval had contacted the British much earlier and consequently a delay was found to be perfectly acceptable. The date for the meeting was then set at December 12.

During the time provided by this postponement frantic negotiations were carried on between London, Paris and Rome in the hope of finding some solution which would make it unnecessary to introduce any new commodities (i.e. oil) to the sanctions list. Laval had been promoting such negotiations since the beginning of the dispute without any promises of great support for the League. He seemed to be prepared to sacrifice almost anything for friendly relations with Italy. To facilitate negotiations with Mussolini Laval had a private telephone line to Rome and it was his

practice to leave Geneva, cross the border to France, and confer with Mussolini by telephone.²⁹

The British on the other hand were continually professing their support of the League. In various speeches in the British election campaign of 1935 Sir Samuel Hoare told the British people that the core of their foreign policy was the support of the League. As late as December 5 in the British House of Commons the Foreign Secretary concluded by saying:

I state these facts once again lest anyone should be so foolish as to harbour suspicions that the French and ourselves were attempting to sidetrack the League and to impose upon the world a settlement that could not be accepted by the three parties to the dispute.³⁰

It would seem then that while anything could be expected from France at least Britain would support the League.

This was not so.

On December 7 Sir Samuel Hoare set out for a health resort in the Alps. At the request of the Prime Minister, Sir Samuel Hoare stopped in Paris to talk with Laval. It was as a result of these conversations that the Hoare-Laval Plan came into being. It was a last ditch stand to avoid further discussion of sanctions in the League. "It consisted of two parts; first, a proposal for cutting three slices off the extremities of the Ethiopian Empire and giving these to Italy outright; and second, a proposal for

²⁹ Interview with Dr. W. A. Riddell, June 24, 1956.

³⁰ Great Britain, House of Commons Debates, December 5, 1935.

cutting off an additional slice--much larger than all the others put together--and giving this too, to Italy, in fact though not in form.³¹ These territories corresponded fairly closely with the territories then occupied by Italian troops and was in effect a proposal to reward Italy for breaking her pledges under the Covenant.

This plan was forwarded to the governments at Rome and Addis Ababa for their consideration. Ethiopia, of course, immediately rejected the proposal and called for a meeting of the Assembly in which there would be "full and free public debate conducted frankly in the face of the world free from all pressures, direct or indirect. . . . The Ethiopian Government, taught by cruel experience, declares itself firmly opposed to all secret negotiations."³² The League Council met on December 18 to discuss the Plan but in view of the Ethiopian reply there was really nothing to discuss. The speeches of Eden and Laval in attempting to defend and explain the actions leading to the pact were viewed by most observers as extremely unconvincing. Monsieur Wolde Mariam speaking for Ethiopia brought out once more the faithlessness of the League members in their handling of this dispute.

Is it consistent with the Covenant that the Covenant breaking state should be begged, by the League of Nations, to be good enough to accept a large part of its victim's

³¹A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, p. 295.

³²Quoted in A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., II, p. 309.

territory together with the effective control of the rest under the cloak of the League?

. . . Should not this problem which is vital to the future of international relations between all peoples, whatever their strength, their colour or their race, be laid first of all before the League, and examined publicly there in complete independence under the eyes of the world?³³

This ended the Hoare-Laval Pact itself though its effects in delaying the oil sanction discussion cannot be measured. This meeting of the Council was then adjourned without discussions of any further steps to try to bring the hostilities to an end.

The hopes of League supporters were again raised by the storm of protest against the Pact, which broke out in the British House of Commons and Britain as a whole.³⁴ The British people felt that the government had promised, during the election campaign, to support the League and this was certainly forsaking that promise. For a short time the Prime Minister and the Cabinet supported Hoare but when the protest continued Hoare's resignation was handed in and accepted. He was succeeded by Anthony Eden who was looked upon as a firm supporter of the League. Although there was some protest in France it was not too strong and Laval managed to hold power until January 22, 1936.

³³ Ibid., p. 310.

³⁴ For an account of British feeling and an account of the Peace Ballot see A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., pp. 48-52. The results of the ballot were also reported in most Canadian newspapers.

The failure of the Hoare-Laval plan caused a reconsideration of the oil sanctions proposal. The Committee of Eighteen met on January 22 and decided to appoint a committee of experts "to conduct a technical examination of the conditions governing the trade in and transport of petroleum and its derivatives. . . .". They were also asked to make a report to the Committee of Eighteen at an early date estimating the probable effectiveness of such sanctions. The committee of experts presented their report on February 12. The report contained an analysis of consumption, stock, sources of supply and changes in any of these in the preceding five years. The committee concluded that Italy had on hand two and a half to three months supply of oil. They pointed out also that the United States could, if it so desired, meet the complete increase of demand from Italy; but if the United States would limit exports to the "normal" amount, oil sanctions would stop the Italian war effort in three months.³⁵ Since Italy did not overcome Ethiopian resistance for quite some time the League members with United States cooperation could presumably have frustrated Italy's attempt even at this late date.

It was not until March 2 that the Committee of Eighteen met to discuss the report of the experts. By this time the Italian Government had placed pressure on the new French foreign minister, M. Flandin, by threatening Italian withdrawal from the League and the renunciation of the Franco-

³⁵See footnote 27 above.

Italian Pact which would of course be followed by the movement of Italian troops to the French border. M. Flandin, for these reasons, asked the Committee of Eighteen to delay discussions on oil sanctions until the Committee of Thirteen, which was to meet the following day, had indicated whether or not there would be any new attempt at conciliation. The Committee of Thirteen met and forwarded to the two governments, notes appealing to them to prepare the way for the League to negotiate a peace. Thus, once again France had been able to delay oil sanctions. While the League was awaiting replies from the two governments Hitler ordered the reoccupation, by the German army, of the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland. Attention now became divided and France was more anxious than ever to maintain friendly relations with Italy. The delay brought about at the request of M. Flandin on March 2 had then brought to an end the discussion of oil sanctions and it became only a matter of time until Italy completed her conquest and sanctions were dropped.

G. The Attitude Taken by Other Groups

The smaller nations were of course appalled by Italy's treatment of Ethiopia and were prepared to support the League to the limit. These nations had a variety of reasons for supporting strong action. One group saw the League as the only method for them, as small nations, to occupy a position of some equality. A second group found themselves in a position where the repartition of Africa

was most undesirable. Portugal, for example, would almost inevitably lose by any such repartition. There was a third group desiring the establishment of some type of international order. There was a fourth group opposed to any strong action being taken by the League. Austria, Hungary and Albania were all so closely tied economically and politically to Italy that it was virtually impossible for them to take a strong stand. Switzerland's support was only lukewarm but would no doubt in the final analysis uphold the League.

The attitude of the Papacy, while extremely important, was not easy to determine. It was Toynbee's impression that Pope Pius XI "abhorred Signor Mussolini's attempt to provide for Italy's national needs by making a cold-blooded war of aggression upon a weak and unoffending African people".³⁶ This conclusion he derives from an analysis of a number of speeches made by the Pope in the early part of the crisis. However, politically, the Pope's hands were tied and his policy seems to have been to allow the individual members of the clergy to make their own decisions on the matter. There were a number of cases in which Roman Catholic priests gave active support to the war. The lack of leadership from the Papacy was an embarrassment to many Roman Catholics in England and elsewhere. It did not, however, embarrass the Catholics in Quebec.

³⁶ A. J. Toynbee, Op. cit., p. 102.

The Black Races throughout the world were of course hoping that the League would take strong action. This would represent a decision of the white man to aid the black against white domination and the League would then become one place in which they were treated as equals. There was of course some reaction of whites in the other direction. They recognized that a grievous wrong was being committed but thought it best to allow it to go on rather than have the Black Races demand equality.

There are certain facts about the two countries involved that no doubt had some effect on the decisions made by the Canadian Government and the attitude taken by the Canadian people. Italy is a country of very few natural resources and yet has a very large population. Italians exploited this situation to the limit, claiming that colonies were necessary as a source of raw materials and also as an emigration safety valve. It was also pointed out by Italian propagandists that Italy was now doing what Britain and France had done a hundred years earlier and also that territorial compensations received after the World War were not comparable to those obtained by Britain or France nor could they be considered as having fulfilled the promises made to them to induce them to join the Allies in 1915. Some Canadians at least accepted these arguments though no Italians moved to these colonial areas and the Fascist Government encouraged a high birth rate.

The existence of slavery and slave trading in Ethiopia was bound to have some effect on public opinion. The charges made by Italy in this case had been substantiated by League reports. It had been pointed out, however, that this area was only starting on the road to civilization. Emperor Hailie Selassie had been in control of the government only six years and since that time great steps had been taken. That Italy with her poison gas, torturing and killing people by the hundreds, was going to speed up the civilization of this native kingdom should not have been an argument with any significant effect upon Canadian thinking.

It can be readily seen that the Canadian action was responsible for only a very small part of the delaying of effective sanctions against Italy though it may have come at a very crucial time.³⁷ It was, however, typical of Canadian foreign policy and demonstrated a disinterest in foreign affairs by Canadians. While the Woodsworth charge that the government was stifling the discussion of foreign affairs was probably valid, the fact remains that enough information was available to the Canadian public, through their newspapers, to enable them to make decisions of a positive nature in this field. However this disinterest of Canadians, in so far as it existed as a phenomenon of the age and geographical location of the country, does not excuse the failure of leadership of the Canadian Government of the time.

³⁷ Dr. Riddell believed that Laval would have been unable to block the addition of oil to the sanctions list had the Lapointe statement not been made.

CHAPTER II

CANADA AND THE LEAGUE
BEFORE AND DURING THE ETHIOPIAN DISPUTE

The domestic affairs of Canada undoubtedly determined to a considerable degree the reaction of Canadians to the Italo-Ethiopian war. It would perhaps be more appropriate to say "lack of reaction" for the attention of Canadians was directed toward the depression and the fall election. Newspaper coverage of the crisis became progressively poorer as the election drew nearer and the crisis grew worse. Very little mention was made of foreign affairs by the politicians during the campaign. The existence of this "apathy" on the part of the people meant that the politically logical course for any Canadian Government to follow was the one which had proven to be acceptable during the preceding fifteen years.

A. Attitude to the League and the League Covenant

Canada looked upon the League, from its inception, as a means of extending her autonomy. Her insistence on obtaining at least an indented signature to the peace treaty was only the first step in the process which continued through the Ethiopian crisis to the outbreak of the Second World War. Canada's representative at the League during the crisis was well aware of this handicap. He described

his position in the following manner: "It will be seen
that I
therefore/became the permanent representative of a country
determined to continue to resist any encroachment on her
newly acquired rights and privileges".¹ Under these con-
ditions the position of the Canadian representative to the
League was certainly an unenviable one.

It is unfortunate that circumstances permitted and even encouraged a nation such as Canada, determined to avoid any commitments in foreign affairs, to accept the League Covenant. Canada's attitude is perhaps best illustrated by her attack on Article X of the Covenant, which contained an undertaking "to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League". It goes on to say that the Council will advise the Members as to how this duty should be fulfilled. Canada made her first objection while the Covenant was still at the drafting stage. Sir Robert Borden argued in a secret memorandum that this article implied: "(a) that all existing territorial delimitations are just and expedient. (b) that they will continue to be just and expedient. (c) that the signatories will be responsible therefore".² He went on to recommend that the article be taken out or greatly altered, but his objections and suggestions were to no avail. When the Covenant was

¹ Walter A. Riddell, Security By Conference, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1947), p. 27.

² Quoted in R. A. Mackay and E. B. Rogers, Canada Looks Abroad, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 94.

being considered by the Canadian House of Commons some members objected to the intimation that the League Council would determine Canada's contribution in any crisis. This criticism was met by the statement that the League would act only in an advisory capacity and further that Canada could suggest various amendments to the Covenant in the future. Parliament then accepted the Covenant without a division.³

It did not take long for Canada to renew her attack on Article X. At the first assembly of the League Canada's representative, Mr. C. J. Doherty, moved that Article X be deleted. He very adequately summed up Canada's stand in the following words:

It is a material guarantee where the risks run and the burden enforced are not equal between nations entering it, and where inequality is particularly striking in the case of Canada's position and works especially to their detriment. Canada, keenly alive to the horror that was involved in the World War will look with critical eye indeed on a clause so easily susceptible of being ⁴ read as making everybody's wars their wars.

The assembly rejected the proposed deletion after various representatives had pointed out that Article X was defined and limited by Article XVI.

The return to power of the Liberals in 1921 did not alter the Canadian attitude though the new government did attempt to find new methods of reaching the same goal.

³ Canada, House of Commons Debates, Special Session, 1919.

⁴ W. E. Armstrong, Canada and the League of Nations: The Problem of Peace, (Geneva, 1930).

The Rt. Hon. Ernest Lapointe proposed an amendment which suggested that the Council, when advising the members on fulfillment of obligations, should "take into account the political and geographical circumstances of each State". The amendment included a further clause stating that the governments should consider of utmost importance the advice of the Council but "no member shall be under obligation to engage in any act of war without the consent of its Parliament, Legislature or other representative body".⁵ Messrs. King and Lapointe emphasized in speeches in Canada as well that Parliament would have to make the decisions in foreign affairs. The only period in which they neglected to emphasize this policy was when it came time to put it into practice.⁶

At the fourth assembly Canada's representative, Sir Lomer Gouin, recognized that Article X would be neither deleted nor amended and consequently accepted the idea of an "Interpretive Resolution". In the voting Persia alone opposed it though a number of nations abstained. The resolution was not much different from the amendment proposed earlier by Mr. Lapointe. The agreement of the other nations was obtained, not because they agreed with Canada's attempt to "water down" Article X, but because they were becoming

⁵ R. A. Mackay and E. B. Rogers, Canada Looks Abroad, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 97.

⁶ An excellent example of this is the fact that Parliament was not consulted when Prime Minister King accepted sanctions on October 29, 1935. This is more fully discussed in Chapter V.

disillusioned with the League as a method of collective security and were turning instead to regional agreements and mutual guarantees.⁷

Canada's attitude to Article XVI of the League Covenant is also indicative of Canadian foreign policy and it was extremely important in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. This article makes it very clear that if any member of the League should resort to war

. . . in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15 it shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State . . .⁸

It goes on to say that the Council will recommend certain measures if military sanctions become necessary and in any sanctions the members agree to support one another in the case of retaliation or to minimize losses from trade disruptions. Canada accepted this article although clearly she was determined to avoid its implementation.

At the outset Sir Robert Borden attempted to get the wording of this Article changed so that it would be more vague, but hesitated to press too hard for fear that some countries might not accept the Covenant without this Article. Mr. Mack Eastman summed up Canada's attitude to

⁷ George P. deT. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian External Relations, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 372-373.

⁸ See League of Nations, Reports and Resolutions on the Subject of Article XVI of the Covenant, 1927, p. 43.

sanctions in the following way: "In spite of such accidental inconsistencies, Canada did consistently oppose sanctions, the discussion of sanctions, and the elaboration of the machinery of sanctions for the first fifteen years of the League's existence".⁹ This attitude was made clear again in 1928 by the Canadian delegation. Their report stated:

Dr. Riddell emphasized the importance of conciliation, arbitration and the prevention of disputes rather than sanctions. He stated that in his opinion the Council could not determine the aggressor, and that it was the duty of each member of the League to decide for itself whether a breach of the Covenant had been made.¹⁰

Dr. Riddell, even at the time when he proposed the extension of sanctions, did not believe that this was the proper function of the League. However, once the principle of sanctions had been accepted and a start was made in the application of them he thought it only logical to introduce effective sanctions.¹¹

Considering other areas of League policy Canada appears to be guilty also of helping to prevent the discussion of the problem of the distribution of raw materials when this question was introduced by the Italian delegate in the League Assembly meeting of 1920. Mr. Rowell defended the Canadian

⁹ S. M. Eastman, Canada At Geneva, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946), p. 71.

¹⁰ Eastman, Op. cit., p. 72.

¹¹ Interview with W. A. Riddell, June 24, 1956.

position on the grounds that this was an "internal matter" and that the discussion of such matters would simply overload the League machinery which was set up primarily for the maintenance of peace. This was certainly not in accord with Canada's actions, though there is no doubt that Mr. Rowell was being honest as far as he was concerned.¹² Italy could then blame Canada for blocking the attempt to do something about her lack of raw materials by peaceful means.

When it came to other arrangements within the League, made to bolster the collective security aspect of the Covenant, Canada's attitude was not much different. The Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee was opposed from the beginning. Canada's reply indicated consistency if nothing else.

. . . the Canadian government is of the opinion that the nature of the proposed Treaty is such that so far as it purports to impose a future obligation to take specific action in circumstances incapable of present definition, it would be hopeless to expect the people of Canada to accept it, and it is also of the opinion that, even if those provisions of the draft were generally approved and brought into operation, their effect would neither be to minimize the danger of war nor to bring about any useful limitation of armaments.¹³

When the Draft Treaty failed of adoption a new proposal was made in the Geneva Protocol. In addition to providing for collective security it emphasized the arbitration and conciliation aspects. The government's reply was similar to

¹² N. W. Rowell's attitude toward the League is more fully considered in the following chapter.

¹³ League of Nations, Official Journal, August 1924, p. 1039.

the one quoted above. It declined to recommend to Parliament that Canada become a party to the Protocol largely because of its "rigid provisions for application of economic and military sanctions in practically every future war".¹⁴ It was in the assembly debates on the Protocol that Senator Dandurand made his famous statement which indicated the reason for the attitude taken by most Canadians. "Canada lives in a fireproof house far from inflammable materials". Thus it became obvious that in addition to weakening the key articles of the Covenant Canada was doing a great deal to prevent the strengthening of the League by new means.

In other fields of League of Nations' activity Canada's attitude and approach was a little more positive. Certainly she was most cooperative in the International Labour Organization. Similarly her support of social work, within the League gradually increased. The same applies to almost all phases of League operations which did not require any commitments in relation to war or war attitudes.¹⁵

When the European nations found it impossible to strengthen the League they turned to regional arrangements outside the League. In the discussions of these Canada did not participate though she did accept the Kellogg-Briand Pact. This simply stated that war was "renounced as an instrument of national policy". It contained no obligations

¹⁴ League of Nations, Official Journal, September 1925, p. 1212.

¹⁵ S. Mack Eastman covers this well in Canada at Geneva, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946).

to aid the other signatories if they became involved in some difficulty, and therefore was acceptable to Canada.

The first major test of the League came as a result of the Sino-Japanese dispute. Even at so critical a time as this Canada retained her policy of no commitments and did her best to minimize the obligations of the Covenant. There was never any doubt that the Japanese were guilty; yet Canada urged a "do little" if not a "do nothing" policy. Sir George Perley speaking for Canada in the Assembly noted that Japan was committing a wrong and proposed that "we should affirm as solemnly as possible the fundamental truth that no infringement of the territorial integrity, and no change in the political independence, of any Member of the League of Nations which is brought about by force in disregard of the undertakings of Article X of the Covenant can be recognized as valid and effective by other Members of the League".¹⁶ Cautious as this statement was it was further diluted by Mr. Cahan, a member of the Cabinet, a short time later. He began by stating that the views he was about to express were "more or less personal" though he thought the Canadian Government would concur in most of them. He talked at length about the long friendship between Canada and Japan and mentioned only briefly that Japan might, in this case, have committed a wrong. The effect of this speech on world opinion was to create the feeling that Canada was pro-Japanese. The speech was

¹⁶ Quoted in George P. de T. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian External Affairs (Toronto: Oxford University Press), p. 400.

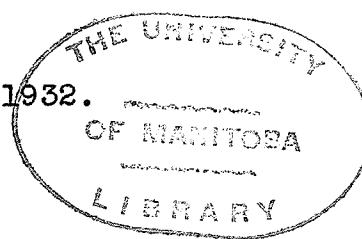
described by Mack Eastman in the following words: "He pleaded eloquently on both sides - but only briefly and in closing on the side of the victim."¹⁷

The only real criticism of government action, voiced in the House of Commons, was that of J. S. Woodsworth, who is described by G. P. deT Glazebrook as the "leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Party and one of the members best informed on foreign affairs."¹⁸ His major point of criticism was the lack of information available about Canadian external affairs. "It is unfortunate that questions relative to our imperial or external affairs are so often left until the last days of the session, a time when most members are tired and impatient to get away."¹⁹ He went on to prove his point about the lack of information and lack of interest in foreign affairs by quoting a reply to a question on League affairs made by the Prime Minister earlier in the session. Mr. Bennett had stated that he did not feel it wise to advise the delegates with the little knowledge at his disposal, to lay blame on either China or Japan. What additional information he desired before he passed judgment he did not say. Mr. Woodsworth pointed out that there was a duty to the League and to carry out this duty the Prime Minister should have obtained for himself, and made available to the House,

¹⁷ Eastman, Op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁸ Glazebrook, Op. cit., p. 401.

¹⁹ Canada, House of Commons Debates, May 25, 1932.



the information necessary to make a decision. He concluded his indictment with a warning: "But I would point out that through our inactivity we are laying the foundation for a war in the future." His pleas fell on deaf ears, however, as Canadian Governments continued on the one hand to insist that Parliament would have to determine foreign policy and on the other to deny the Members of Parliament the information necessary to reach these decisions rationally. No maturation seemed to occur in Canadian policy during this dispute.

The first statement giving any indication of what might be expected from the Canadian Government in the Ethiopian crisis was made by Mr. G. Howard Ferguson on September 14, 1935, at the meeting of the League Assembly. Surprisingly it gave some reason to hope for support of the League by Canada. He expressed the hope that a pacific solution might be found and then went on to say:

If such a solution is not found, and if there is resort to war, then the whole post war system of collective security, based not on arms and alliances but on the outlawry of war and the pacific solution of all disputes would be in danger of collapse. Such a collapse would affect every member of the League in every continent. . . . We hope that an honourable and peaceful solution of the Ethiopian controversy will yet be reached. If unfortunately, this proves not to be the case, Canada will join with the other members of the League in considering how, by unanimous action, peace can be maintained.²⁰

²⁰ Canada, Documents Relating to the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict, (Ottawa, 1936), p. 161.

Here, finally, seemed to be an indication that Canada recognized the value of collective security and was willing to take her part in the maintenance of it.

League supporters had their hopes raised still further by Mr. Ferguson's statement in the Committee of Eighteen on October 11. The minutes of this Committee record Mr. Ferguson as having been of the opinion that:

The sole problem before the Committee was to decide what sanctions the delegations could all agree upon that afternoon and put into application immediately. Let them show the world that the League was no longer to be scoffed or laughed at, but that it meant business, and that when a breach of its Covenant took place it proposed to deal with the aggressor in the proper way.²¹

He went on to give recognition to all the problems involved in introducing sanctions since there was no precedent, but, he argued, immediate action was necessary. ". . . but surely there was something - perhaps with regard to a financial sanction or the arms embargo - that could be announced to the world tonight in order that it might be known that the League was taking some action."²² Many found this statement most encouraging but the statements of R. B. Bennett and Mackenzie King in the election campaign then at its height should have prevented any over-optimism.

When the Bennett government was defeated a new statement of policy became necessary. This came on October 29

²¹ Ibid., p. 162.

²² Ibid., p. 163.

in a statement to the press given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mackenzie King. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this statement could be interpreted in a variety of ways.

In the present instance, when an earnest effort is being made with wide support to test the feasibility of preventing or at least terminating war by the use of economic sanctions, and when there is no room for doubt as to where the responsibility rests for the outbreak of the war, and having regard also to the position taken by Canada at the recent Assembly, the Canadian government is prepared to cooperate fully in the endeavor. . . . The Canadian government at the same time desires to make it clear that it does not recognize any commitment binding Canada to adopt military sanctions, and that no such commitment could be made without the prior approval of the Canadian Parliament. . . . It is also to be understood that the government's course in approving economic sanctions in this instance is not to be regarded as necessarily establishing a precedent for future action.²³

He had then assured League enthusiasts that Canada would not go to war, autonomists that Canada was and would be acting as an independent nation, and isolationsists that Parliament would decide what action would be taken. The isolationists relied upon the fifty-five Liberal members from Quebec in the House to decide the right way. Any dissatisfaction expressed by Canadians in regard to the statement was due to the degree to which they felt it expressed their desires and not that the statement itself was basically bad.

²³ Ibid., p. 166.

Meanwhile Canada had agreed to introduce economic sanctions by November 18 as the League requested and the steps necessary to accomplish this were being taken. Then came further discussions in the Committee of Eighteen about the effectiveness of sanctions and Dr. Riddell, who had replaced Mr. Ferguson as Canada's representative after the election, sent a cable to Ottawa for instructions. Before a reply could be received, however, he was called upon to make his statement in the Committee. He decided, on the basis of the October 29 press release and the absence of instructions to do otherwise, to move that oil, amongst other materials, be added to the list. The reply from the government arrived a short time later instructing him to do nothing.²⁴

On November 11 the Italian consul left an Aide Memoire, with the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, which reviewed the Italian case emphasizing the gravity of the measures contemplated and suggesting that some retaliatory measures might be taken by Italy. The communication concluded by asking the Canadian Government for some indication of intended action. The reply, sent on November 27, stated that Canada had "always believed that their membership in the League of Nations implied the acceptance of the obligations set forth in the Covenant to which they have always tried to conform. In the present instance, they do not consider that these obligations admit

²⁴ Interview with W. A. Riddell, June 24, 1956.

of any other construction than that placed upon them by the Assembly of the League."²⁵ The reply ended on an apologetic note by expressing the hope that Italy would see that Canada was only fulfilling her obligations. Probably the most effective pressure put on the Canadian Government was that which resulted from the work of the Italian Consul-General in Montreal. In this city considerable pro-Italian and pro-Fascist opinion was making itself heard. Camilien Houde asserted: "If war should come between Britain and Fascist Italy French Canadian sympathies would be with Italy."²⁶ This no doubt was an exaggeration but isolationist opinion was certainly stirred up.

On December 2, while Mackenzie King and the Under Secretary for External Affairs were in Florida, the Acting Secretary of State, Ernest Lapointe, issued a statement to the press. It began by reviewing the developments in the Italo-Ethiopian struggle and the steps taken by Canada to fulfill her League commitments, up to that time. "With regard to the futile application of measures already adopted by the League and the possible extension of the scope of such measures the Canadian Government has not departed in any way from the position as stated by the Prime Minister on October 29." He then went on to discuss the oil sanction.

²⁵ Documents Relating to the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict, p. 171.

²⁶ Riddell, Op. cit., p. 129.

The suggestion which has appeared from time to time, that the Canadian government has taken the initiative in the extension of the embargo upon exportation of key commodities to Italy, and particularly in the placing of a ban upon shipments of coal, oil, iron and steel, is due to a misunderstanding. The Canadian government has not and does not intend to take the initiative in any such action; and the opinion which was expressed by the Canadian member of the Committee - and which has led to the reference to the proposal as a Canadian proposal - represented only his own personal opinion, and his views as a member of the Committee - and not the views of the Canadian government.²⁷

The furor caused by this statement in the press will be discussed in the following chapter along with some of the probable reasons for making it.

The effect on world opinion was to create the impression that Canada was opposed to oil sanctions. It of course aided Italy greatly in her propaganda campaign and her attempt to impress upon the world that all opposition to Italy came from Britain. As related in the first chapter it was the Hoare-Laval Pact and other negotiations between France, Britain and Italy that finally dealt the death blow to sanctions. However, it was Dr. Riddell's opinion that "Laval would have done his best to delay oil sanctions but probably could not have except for Lapointe".²⁸ Whether oil sanctions would have been accepted if no statement had been made by Lapointe is difficult to determine

²⁷ Ibid., p. 172. The whole text also appears as an appendix in R. A. Mackay and E. B. Rogers, Op. cit., pp. 348-349.

²⁸ Interview with W. A. Riddell, June 24, 1956.

but there can be no doubt that it did help the Italian propaganda campaign considerably.

When the matter came up for discussion in the House of Commons on February 11, 1936, Mackenzie King stated that Lapointe had communicated with him and that the press release had had his approval. There had been no doubt in his mind, prior to this time, that Dr. Riddell was extremely careful not to take any action without consulting the government. "I must say that having held that opinion of him I had full confidence that nothing would be done at Geneva which might be construed as having been done in the name of Canada which the government of Canada itself had not authorized in the first instance."²⁹ He went on to say that Dr. Riddell had "no authority and no right" to make the statement he did. It was impossible for him to act as an individual in the Committee of Eighteen and the fact that it became known as a "Canadian proposal" is adequate proof. His final argument was to ask the House if it thought that if the situation had been worsened by oil sanction "this government would have been kept free from criticism if it had not been made known that this was not a Canadian proposal but a proposal of the whole committee."³⁰ No attempt was made by either Mr. King or Mr. Lapointe to

²⁹ Canada, House of Commons Debates, February 11, 1936, p. 93.

³⁰ Ibid.

defend the press release on the basis of right or wrong for the whole situation.

R. B. Bennett, the leader of the opposition did not criticize the attempt of the government to make it clear that it was not a Canadian proposal but did criticize the method chosen to accomplish this. He expressed the opinion that all that would have been required was a statement pointing out that any suggestions made in the subcommittee were the suggestions of the whole group and not of any single government.

T. C. Douglas criticized the entire handling of the problem from a very different point of view.

Is it because those people who make their profits out of oil have a great deal more weight in the councils of the governments of the world than the dictates of humanity? The people of Canada are asking that we take a stand with the forces of peace rather than with those of financial interests desiring a greater sale of oil.³¹

He objected to the argument that economic sanctions would lead to military sanctions and therefore to avoid becoming embroiled in war Canada should not apply any sanctions. This, he says, is not valid because there is at least an equal possibility that the failure to apply sanctions will lead to war.

One other strong criticism was voiced at this time in the House. Mr. Heaps complained of the lack of information of an official nature available to members and accused the

³¹ Ibid., p. 127.

government of secret diplomacy. The accusation was based on a statement by the Prime Minister which referred to "certain correspondence which is confidential in its nature". Mr. Heaps said: ". . . when there is so much at stake, I think that having been at the brink of war, we ought to put an end to those secret negotiations as between country and country and let the people know all the facts."³² Prime Minister King defended the use of confidential correspondence in two ways. Firstly, Premier Bennett had done exactly the same thing, and secondly: "It is not a matter of secret diplomacy at all it is simply a matter of carrying on government".³³ The latter statement was regarded by some as contradicting his insistence that Parliament should decide matters of foreign policy.

In June of 1936 Addis Ababa was captured and it became necessary to recognize the failure of sanctions as they had been applied. After a long speech reviewing the Italo-Ethiopian war and the actions taken by Canada, Prime Minister King moved that sanctions be brought to an end. He listed all the sanctions recommended by the League and pointed out that Canada had complied with the League's request. He reviewed also the oil sanctions proposal and dwelt at some length on the idea that this had been a very serious proposal and proved this by pointing out that the

³² Ibid., February 17, 1936, p. 221.

³³ Ibid.

Italian threats of reprisals were taken seriously by some of the larger European nations. Once more he defended his repudiation of Dr. Riddell.

During November, the European press were full of assertions that Canada was initiating and urging the imposition of an oil sanction. It became imperative to correct this serious misapprehension. The Canadian government had not urged the step in question. Further it did not consider that Canada should initiate such a step. Canada had no special power, no special interest in the present conflict which would warrant such a portentous gesture. It was not upon Canada, but upon the countries nearer the conflict that the chief brunt of the consequences would fall.³⁴

He then goes on to say that the lifting of sanctions was determined by the Cabinet before any information was obtained as to what the intention of the British Government was in the matter.

Included also in this speech was a comment concerning the need for a wide discussion of the problems of foreign affairs. "It is undoubtedly essential that in Parliament and out of it there should be full and responsible discussion of the vital questions of Canada's relations to other states."³⁵ This lesson Mr. King seemed to have learned after each critical problem of foreign affairs and forgotten before the development of the next. In any event he seems to have done little to encourage the full discussion of such problems.

³⁴ Ibid., June 18, 1936, p. 3864.

³⁵ Ibid.

The most effective criticism of the above statement came from J. S. Woodsworth. He suggested that while the decision to lift sanctions was probably made by the Cabinet quite some time ago it was, as usual, not announced until after the "great nations had declared themselves". He was as disturbed at this time as he was after the Sino-Japanese dispute by the lack of interest and information on foreign affairs. ". . . For a long time we in this house have taken very little interest in foreign affairs. The discussion of a new post office or of a wharf apparently means more in this house than the discussion of some of these world shaking events; yet the issue of peace and war is really involved in our foreign policy."³⁶ In addition to taking a greater interest he proposed that Canada should be prepared to give up some of her sovereignty and accept with greater conscientiousness her obligations to the League Covenant.

The Canadian objective in League policy from its inception to 1935 was, then, to attempt to minimize advance commitments whenever possible. The following chapters will attempt to show that while any positive foreign policy would have alienated a sector of public opinion of considerable political significance the "do-nothing" policy followed was the result of underestimating Pro-League and

³⁶ Ibid., p. 3873.

Pro-British feeling³⁷ and placing great emphasis on French-Canadian opinion.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND CANADA

THE FRENCH POSITION

The League of Nations was accepted by the Canadian government and the public at large as a means of maintaining world peace and order. However, when it came to the question of Canada's participation in the League, the Canadian government was faced with a difficult choice. On the one hand, the Canadian public was in favor of the League, while on the other hand, the Canadian government was not fully committed to the League's principles. This led to a situation where the Canadian government was unable to make a clear decision on whether or not to join the League.

One of the main reasons for this indecision was the fact that the Canadian government was not fully convinced of the League's effectiveness. They were also concerned about the potential costs of participating in the League, such as the financial burden of maintaining a military presence abroad. Additionally, there was a fear that joining the League would lead to a loss of national sovereignty, as the League's policies could potentially conflict with Canadian interests.

Another factor that contributed to the Canadian government's indecision was the lack of support from the Canadian public. While the Canadian public was in favor of the League, they were also concerned about the potential costs and risks involved in participating in the League. This led to a situation where the Canadian government was unable to make a clear decision on whether or not to join the League.

In the end, the Canadian government decided to join the League, despite their initial reservations. This decision was made in part due to the pressure from the Canadian public, who were strongly in favor of the League. Additionally, the Canadian government believed that joining the League would help to maintain world peace and order, and prevent future conflicts.

³⁷ Since Pro-British sentiment believed British policy to be strong support for the League the final effect on policy was the same. This is more fully discussed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

EVIDENCE OF PRO-LEAGUE OPINION IN CANADA
DURING THE CRISIS

The "do-nothing" policy of the Canadian Government during the Italo-Ethiopian war produced a variety of reactions throughout the country. It became obvious that there was considerable support for isolationism, pacifism, the League and the British Empire. The strongest support for the League came in the editorials of the Winnipeg Free Press. It was the only major daily newspaper in Canada which consistently and completely backed the idea of strong support for a strong League.

While the crisis was still in its early stages the Winnipeg Free Press expressed disappointment in the attempts that were being made to circumvent the League. Discussing the Three Power Talks in August 1935 it pointed out that "the League Council has once more put on a disappointing performance". Speculating on the outcome of these talks it seemed to the editors that there was no hope for any decision or agreement that did not favour Italy. A rather pessimistic view of the chances of League survival was also expressed.

These things have been happening, but in the democratic countries there has lingered the hope that the peace structure despite

the indifference with which it is regarded in high places and the ineffectiveness with which it sought to maintain its functions in different situations, would gain in strength and prestige as time went on; that when the inescapable crisis did arrive the League would discover itself and act as arbiter of the nations in the cause of justice and for the protection of world peace.¹

Thus the leading Liberal newspaper left no doubt from the beginning about its approval of strong support for the League by Canada.

The support of the League by this newspaper was not without the realization that there might be serious consequences for Canada. In commenting on a resolution passed by the Native Sons of Canada calling for complete support of economic sanctions but suggesting that a plebiscite should be held before Canadian soldiers were sent overseas the Free Press had this to say: "If Canada at Geneva supports the application of economic sanctions against Italy, then Canada is at once committed to the enforcement of the sanctions should Italy disregard the League's decision that she must not invade Ethiopia assuming such a decision is arrived at."² There was no question, as far as the editors were concerned, that Canada was committed to apply sanctions. This was dealt with as though it was common knowledge which could be obtained by simply reading the League Covenant which had been accepted by Canada.

¹ Winnipeg Free Press, August 17, 1935.

² Ibid., August 23, 1935.

The determined support of the League and opposition to Italian violation of the Covenant did not prevent the editors from recognizing that Italy's position was an extremely difficult one and that some action was necessary to aid her. They pointed out that Italy had a very pressing need for greater territory and also that there was considerable truth in Italy's charge of unfair treatment at the conclusion of the 1914-18 war. The suggested solution was that there should be a redivision of the African mandates on the understanding that the "Italian battalions and warships be demobilized". The proposed solution was advanced with complete understanding of how radical a change this would be in world politics.

At the spectacle of such a redivision, the world might indeed indulge in hearty but good laughter, as the three "haves" were forced by public opinion, as expressed through the League, to divide up with the "have not" who has been breathing fire and slaughter against the harmless Ethiopians for the past six months.³

As the crisis developed the editorials in the Free Press became stronger with the greatest criticism being levelled at the British and French governments for their refusal to take a firm stand. It seemed preposterous to the editors for these countries to apply an arms embargo against Ethiopia as well as Italy when the latter alone was able to obtain arms elsewhere easily. The only reasonable approach, to their way of thinking, was for the League

³ Ibid., August 28, 1935.

to handle the matter by taking a strong stand--especially since that was what the world expected. "The League, as well as Abyssinia, is menaced by the Italian bayonets, and if it does not gather its courage around it and confront the aggressor with a resolution stronger than this one, the fate of feebleness will be its portion."⁴ There was no doubt in their minds that world opinion would support the League if only some leadership were given by the bigger nations who were League members. Even the non-member nations would then give their support.

When Italy attacked Ethiopia the Free Press did not in any way diminish its cry for strong League and Canadian action. There still appeared to be "but one policy for Canada as a League Member" and that was to line herself up with the other League members against the aggressor "in no irresolute way and with no uncertain vote". Regardless of the consequences there was no alternative to strong action from the point of view of obligations to the League, obligations to humanity or obligations to morality.

By the middle of October the attitude or opinion that Canada should be giving greater support to Britain and the British point of view was showing itself to be popular. To this idea the Free Press reaction was that the League should come first and that at that particular time an emphasis upon the Empire connection would have

⁴ Ibid., September 6, 1935.

only bad results. One editorial commented on the stand taken by the Empire Loyalists, in the following words:

These discontented parties apparently think that Canada should be showing the sentimental and emotional reactions which were always in evidence, in the era of our subordination, when war threatened Great Britain. But excited exclamations about "the last man and the last dollar" "ready, aye, ready" would not have been useful in the emergency; they would have done harm by giving support to the injurious report, now being industriously circulated throughout Europe, that the British Empire disguised as the League of Nations is planning to wage a war for its own purposes.⁵

The editorial went on to point out, that though Canada was correct in her support, it was not as extensive as it could have been. Nothing had been done to make it impossible for Canada to fulfill her obligations to the League though "in all the Canadian statements by our representatives at Geneva and by our Prime Minister, there was a guarded and hesitant note . . ." The editors were, then, very conscious of Canada's attitude to the League up to that time and realistically saw that in the speeches made at Geneva there was no real promise of Canadian policy changing to one of effective League support.

There was, in the Free Press comments, a greater degree of realism as to the meaning of sanctions than elsewhere. This became evident in its comments on a series of speeches, made by the Hon. Mr. Rowell, which had argued that Canada was obligated to employ economic sanctions but

⁵ Ibid., October 9, 1935.

she would not have to contribute to military sanctions because of the geographical consideration which Canada had brought to the attention of the world in her fight to minimize her obligations under Article X. This was not, in their view, correct, and Canada was actually committed like any other Member, "to take part in the suppression of a bandit nation making war against the peace of the world; and we might as well accept the fact, which carries with it the possibility, perhaps remote, that we shall have to play a part in the application of military sanctions."⁶ Although this might appear to be very "dangerous territory", not to support the League would be more dangerous. Because, if the League were flouted successfully at this time, it would disappear and there was certain to be, as a result of power politics, a "universal war in the near future". Two days later a similar but not identical stand was taken. In commenting on Canada's decision to apply sanctions the Free Press stated "it is probably in line with public opinion". This conclusion was based on rather flimsy evidence. "Canada is a member of the League of Nations and presumably Canadians want the obligations of membership to be taken seriously."⁷ In regard to the Prime Minister's statement that Canada will cooperate in economic sanctions but "keeps a free hand on the question of military sanctions" the

⁶ Ibid., October 31, 1935.

⁷ Ibid.

editorial was a bit critical. "It may be fairly argued that once a start is made in applying sanctions there can be no stopping short of the desired objective, namely the restoration of peace."⁸ Since Canada was a signatory of the Covenant there was, in the editor's view, no question that if economic sanctions led to military sanctions Canada would have been obligated to take an active part. Canadians, they argued, would have accepted this because it was an obligation.

A short time later the Free Press took notice of the lack of interest and discussion of foreign policy in Canada. This resulted from a speech by Robert Falconer, the former President of the University of Toronto, in which he had suggested that Canada should have a foreign affairs minister, and further, that the discussion of foreign affairs should take a more important place in Parliament because then, and only then, could one expect the Canadian people to have a real interest in these problems. There was whole-hearted agreement and it was pointed out that there were actually only a few small groups that studied international affairs and had any strong opinions on foreign affairs. The editorial concluded by pointing out that Canada had passed from colonial status and was in need of "the backing of a large body of informed opinion".

After the statement to the press had been made by Mr. Lapointe disavowing Riddell, the Free Press editorialized

⁸Ibid.

strongly. It pointed out that Canadians had assumed that sanctions were being imposed to try to stop Italy in her conquest of Ethiopia and obviously the best sanction for this purpose would be oil. The editorial also pointed out that the proposal went without comment for a month. In judging the feeling of the Canadian public on the matter it said:

But it is surely very significant in regard to Canadian opinion on the subject that during the month which had elapsed since the Canadian representative suggested the extension of the economic embargo to include oil there has been no objection in Canada to the proposal. Public opinion received the announcement with a silence which might well in such a case, be regarded as approval and Mr. Lapointe's emphasis in placing sole responsibility on Dr. Riddell will come as a surprise, as a ⁹ shock indeed to the country generally.

This was, perhaps, overstating the case but it must have been the opinion of the editor that the "country generally" desired Canada to take a stand on oil sanctions.

On December 7th Mr. Grant Dexter sent an editorial from Ottawa attempting to explain the Lapointe statement. It began by stating that Lapointe as acting Prime Minister and acting Secretary of State for External Affairs began to hear from the isolationists. This put him in a rather difficult position.

The only way he could answer unjust criticism, so far as the government is concerned was by a public statement. By the end of November the volume of criticism was rising, not subsiding, and Mr. Lapointe appears to have decided

⁹ Ibid., December 3, 1935.

that his end of the sanctions poker was too hot to hold onto. After telephone consultations with Mr. King the statement was issued. But if Mr. Lapointe's statement answered the criticisms of the isolationists, it stirred up a much more disagreeable storm in the League camp. Supporters of the League in Canada, and they appear to be very numerous, are outraged at what appears to them to be a ¹⁰ weakening in Canada's attitude toward Geneva.

It went on to complain that Conservative newspapers were trying to make an imperial issue out of it and blame the whole thing on the dominance of Quebec within the Cabinet. It made no comment about the justification for the charge of Quebec dominance but pointed out that Dr. Riddell "may have spoken out of turn, committed a diplomatic indiscretion" but that even so, nothing should have been done to weaken the proposal for an oil sanction. Whatever the reason was for the statement it could not, in his opinion, justify the weakening of sanctions by dropping the oil proposal.

Two days later another editorial, in a similar vein, appeared in the Free Press. It argued that the Lapointe statement in itself was not a watering down of Canada's position even though the interpretation placed upon it made it so. No mention was made of the intention behind the statement given to the press. It went on to point out that at least some of the harm was undone because "it has been made plain that Canada will go along with the League in whatever policy of economic sanctions it decides to apply". There was also an optimistic note contained in

¹⁰ Ibid., December 7, 1935.

this editorial concerning the future of the League.

The striking revelation of the depth and strength of the pro-League feeling in Canada comes at a time when it is highly desirable that those who hold that collective security by means of the League--which alone has readily available machinery--is the one way of escape for a world, otherwise doomed to anarchy and ruin, should boldly proclaim the faith that is in them.¹¹

The position then of the Free Press throughout the crisis was that of firm support for the League, rather optimistic about the chances of League success, but greatly discouraged by the lack of interest in foreign affairs displayed by the people, and until Mr. Dexter's indication of the party line, critical of the lack of Liberal leadership.

In May of 1936, when it had become evident that the League had failed in this case, the editors placed the responsibility for failure on the governments of Britain and France. It was not the duty of minor League members such as Canada to supply leadership. The nations more directly concerned would have been supported by almost all other League members if they had taken the lead. "Even Canada which was as valourous as a rabbit under Mr. Bennett and not much braver under Mr. King would have stood up, without question, to its obligations."¹²

The attitude of J. W. Dafoe, the Editor-in-Chief of the Winnipeg Free Press, in private correspondence does

¹¹ Ibid., December 9, 1935.

¹² Ibid., May 5, 1936.

not present a much different view. He does not, however, appear to be quite as optimistic as his editorials indicate. In a letter to J. T. Shotwell, written on April 8, he judged the "dominant opinion" in Canada to be isolationism and independence. "Those who favor it (isolation) think that by pursuing it we can control our own future. I try to tell them - not very successfully I fear - that this is not how things will work out; that if we do not lend a hand in trying to save the world, we shall not escape catastrophe if it comes."¹³ The same feeling was expressed in a letter on November 14 to Mary Craig MacGeachy though it did contain the intimation that the "considerable combination which aimed at having Canada take a strictly isolationist position" had been pushed slightly into the background.

In regard to the Riddell incident Dafoe's personal papers do not indicate any variation from the editorials. In a letter from Justice MacDonald¹⁴ the question was asked whether Lapointe's intention had not been simply to bring Riddell into line and avoid the proposal being labeled "Canadian" Dafoe's reply was that this was so. "I knew before he made his statement that he was very much annoyed over Riddell's action, but I understood that it was his intention not to say anything about it, and it is most regrettable that he did not adhere to his purpose, since his

¹³ Dafoe Papers, J. W. Dafoe to J. T. Shotwell, April 8, 1935.

¹⁴ Justice MacDonald was very influential in Liberal circles prior to his appointment in the Courts.

explanation had outside repercussions that he undoubtedly did not foresee.¹⁵ A similar point of view is expressed in a letter to R. B. Inch of the League of Nations Society. In this case the statement was described as "unfortunate" and made "without realizing the misinterpretations which would be put upon it" and it also mentions once more that it was an attempt to reserve judgment on the matter of military sanctions. This, he said was not really difficult to understand.

Some cognisance must be taken of the backward state of opinions in large areas of Canada upon this question of participation in military sanctions, and it might well be that a course of education will be necessary before, with the consent of the people of Canada, it would be possible to secure participation on anything like a satisfactory scale.¹⁶

The failure to provide leadership had then created public opinion which was a source of great difficulty to King and Lapointe in their formulation of policy. Dafoe's reaction could be simply a "die-hard Liberal" refusing to believe that Lapointe did not foresee the effect of his statement or it could be that he had some additional information--the former appears to be more likely.

In reply to a request from Mr. Arnold Toynbee, for information on the Riddell incident, Mr. Dafoe wrote that Lapointe had intended to "sit tight and say nothing" but

¹⁵ Dafoe Papers, J. W. Dafoe to Mr. Justice MacDonald, December 13, 1935.

¹⁶ Dafoe Papers, J. W. Dafoe to R. B. Inch, December 14, 1935.

"the pressure got too warm for Lapointe and he made his statement". He then went on to say that there had been a great deal of criticism of the "Canadian Proposal" but much of it was counterfeit. At the same time "true League sentiment was strong, much stronger than most people imagined. The government got plenty of scorching messages from leading Liberals. Pro-League feeling is strong enough, I think, to keep Canada safely in line with League policies, but there will be no leadership from Ottawa."¹⁷ This was the judgment of Canada's leading Liberal newspaperman as to what the Liberal party in Ottawa would do. He explained the Canadian action by the theory that it was the influence of the permanent officials of the Department of External Affairs which turned the balance against sanctions. He goes on to say that the lead came for the largest part from Geneva. And at Geneva the situation was not too good. "I think that possibly Eden was behind Ferguson and also behind Riddell when he made the suggestion which has had such political repercussions in Canada."¹⁸

Later in the year as it became obvious that Italy was going to have her way and that the League had failed, Dafoe concluded that isolationism was again reaching a peak. In a letter to Prof. Walker of the University of Cape Town he stated "at the moment isolationism is rampant". He had

¹⁷ Dafoe Papers, J. W. Dafoe to A. J. Toynbee, January 10, 1936.

¹⁸ Ibid.

been aware for a long time, he said, that "Imperial feeling was rapidly ebbing" and that the one chance of keeping Canadians internationally minded was to keep them interested in the League. The failure of the League was disastrous to this and "Canada will become part of the North American isolationist block".¹⁹ A letter in a similar vein was written a short time later when Dafoe estimated that Canada was 75 per cent isolationist and he complained that it was "in all the political parties and in the official civil service".²⁰ Thus Dafoe had gone the circle in his estimation of public opinion. When the crisis was in the early stages he believed isolationism to be dominant, as it developed he thought a strong League feeling was evident, and after the Hoare-Laval Pact and League failure, Canada had become 75 per cent isolationist.

When sanctions had been brought to an end and Italian victory recognized Dafoe was quite convinced that the British Government was responsible to a large extent for the failure of the League. Canada's position was not much better though the role she played was probably a minor one. ". . . I wonder if Canada was not jockeyed from London into giving the first lead to surrender." The support Canada gave from the beginning was very reluctant because Bennett

¹⁹ Dafoe Papers, J. W. Dafoe to Professor E. A. Walker, April 17, 1936.

²⁰ Dafoe Papers, J. W. Dafoe to H. Wilson Harris, June 12, 1936.

and King recognized the "strength of isolationist feeling in Canada". However Canada would have gone along with the League if there had been any real leadership. Mr. Dafoe also suggested that "minor influences" could not be overlooked. One of these influences was expressed by Mr. G. H. Woods²¹ when he came from Geneva and "was full of the sing-song that while Abyssinia must be protected it would never do to let a black army defeat a white army". This Dafoe thought he picked up from some of the Britishers there and "he may even have picked it up from Mr. Eden whom he knew very well. . ."²²

Mr. Dafoe was not the only one surprised and disappointed by the Lapointe statement. J. B. Coyne²³ sent a telegram to T. A. Crerar which left little doubt as to his position. ". . . emphatically protest against appalling blunder of Lapointe's statement on sanctions. . . in any case it is hard to conceive any more inept and unintelligent way of expressing a modification of Canada's position before the world".²⁴ This was followed by a letter from Crerar to Coyne in which the explanation is given that Riddell took the action without government consent and

²¹ Mr. G. H. Woods' opinion did not seem to have any support in Canada in J. W. Dafoe's estimation.

²² Dafoe Papers, J.W. Dafoe to N. W. Rowell, July 21, 1936.

²³ J. B. Coyne was quite influential in Liberal circles and ordinarily his opinions were much respected.

²⁴ Dafoe Papers, J. B. Coyne to T. A. Crerar.

deserved repudiation. He concludes that while "the incident was an unfortunate one" and "created a flurry temporarily" there will really be no doubt that Canada intends to support the League. A further explanation of his position came from J. B. Coyne in a later letter. He argued on this occasion that any argument about Riddell's authority did not enter this at all as the government had "by reason of the month delay" accepted this as part of their policy. He concluded that the matter of authority was brought in only as "a peg or excuse for declaring a change of policy". He then went on to suggest that Italy "bought up or subsidized so much of the French and European press" that it was not impossible that these stories that Lapointe's statement was supposed to correct were actually printed for the purpose of irritating French Canadians and isolationists in this country" and in that way modify the imposition of sanctions.

There could be no question of whether oil sanctions

should be introduced or not. It was the natural development, once the principle of sanctions had been accepted, to introduce those sanctions which would be effective.

Coyne concluded by saying that general opinion of a surprisingly wide and unanimous nature was in opposition to the statement of Lapointe. The only way out of the "present unfortunate mess" is for Canada to "carry out her obligation in spirit and in letter as she was apparently doing up to a week ago". A week later Mr. Coyne had

concluded that "Lapointe is now much annoyed that he ever issued his statement". He went on to say that he was hopeful that Canada would as a result of all this take a stronger stand in support of the League.

Another Liberal greatly disappointed by Canada's actions was Newton Rowell who believed that it was a duty to give complete support to the League. In a speech made on September 18, 1935, to the Alumni of Wycliffe College, Rowell expressed the idea that economic and financial sanctions were a "clear obligation but participation in military sanctions was a matter within the discretion of her own Parliament". Rowell also indicated to the permanent civil service in Ottawa exactly what his feelings were. On September 16 he told the Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, Dr. O.D. Skelton, that he was extremely pleased with the statement of Mr. Ferguson which placed "Canada on record as backing the League of Nations". He went on to point out that this was very necessary at this time because "the issue is clearly drawn and unless collective security is vindicated at the present time it has gone".²⁵

In his reply to this letter O. D. Skelton brought out the hesitancy which dominated Canadian policy even when as he put it, "the blatancy and danger of Italy's aggressiveness is beyond question". It did not appear to him to be as simple as to say that Canada was prepared to carry out

²⁵ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to O. D. Skelton, September 16, 1935.

her obligations. There was a necessity to consider that Canada had given ample indication of her reluctance to guarantee the status quo and to enforce sanctions. He warned also that too many people were not taking into consideration the possibility that economic sanctions would not suffice, thus making necessary military sanctions. In the making of policy one cannot disregard "the controversy that is sure to arise in view of the emphasis in many quarters of Canada upon not being committed to war without the authorization of Parliament".²⁶ Skelton's private statements certainly vindicate Dafoe's conclusion that isolationism was strong amongst permanent officials in Ottawa.

On September 24 Rowell replied to this letter. He argued that Canada could not become involved in military sanctions because of the interpretive resolution, in reference to Article X, which Canada brought forward. Even though it was not accepted, because of Persia's objection, it would still be taken into consideration. He then returned to the subject of financial and commercial sanctions which Canada "voluntarily assumed and are clearly obligatory and binding upon her". He gave recognition to the fact that Canada's position was made a little more difficult by the fact that the United States was not a member of the League but this did not justify any failure to stand by commitments.²⁷

²⁷ Rowell Papers, O. D. Skelton to N. W. Rowell, September 21, 1935.

²⁸ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to O. D. Skelton, September 24. 1935.

This elicited a lengthy reply from the Under-Secretary pointing out once more Canada's record. Canada had consistently explained her support of the League on the grounds that there was an emphasis upon "prevention rather than punishment". It was "because of our well known opposition to the whole sanctions doctrine" that we became part of the committee of the League set up to examine the application of sanctions. Also, military sanctions could quite easily become necessary and even if the Council did take into consideration the interpretive resolution it does not mean that Canada will be excepted. Switzerland and Austria are already asking for exemption on the basis of their proximity. He did not however comment on the paradox of Switzerland and Austria asking exemption on the basis of proximity, while Canada asked exemption because of distance. The possibility that military sanctions might be a necessity he proved by the actions of the British fleet in the Mediterranean. He concluded with a prediction of what the Canadian public would think.

The reaction of the Canadian public in the present crisis will not, I think, be finally determined by our obligations under the Covenant, whatever they may be. If we applied economic sanctions, as I think we would if Italy went to war and Britain decided to apply them, the motivating force would be "back up the mother country". . .²⁸

This would also be what happened if these sanctions led to war and whether the war was successful or not

²⁸Rowell Papers, O. D. Skelton to N. W. Rowell, October 2, 1935.

. . . we are likely to see the national unity of Canada, Australia and South Africa disrupted and a large section of their people attacking the League as a clever device for flanking the national position and ensuring that the Dominions will be at war every time that the fine idealism that animates a great section of British public opinion or the realistic militarism that animate another section, or both combined, result in Britain following that course.²⁹

Mr. Skelton raised another objection. He pointed out that under Clause I of Article XVI commercial intercourse was to be ended with non-League members as well as with the aggressor. That it was impossible for Canada to sever commercial relations with the United States no one could deny.

These arguments were rebutted immediately by Mr. Rowell. His strongest point was that Article XVI was part of a "multilateral agreement" and that no "unilateral declaration or resolution on our part" could in any way minimize our obligations. The only way for Canada would be complete withdrawal from the League. The fear that isolationists would blame a resulting war on the British connection was invalid because the obligations of Canada were determined by the Covenant and nothing else. The third objection (that it was impossible to cut off trade with the United States) Rowell replied was not important because the other League members realized that it was impossible and would not ask it of Canada.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to O. D. Skelton, October 12, 1935.

Mr. Skelton however remained firm in his conviction.

"I am still of the view that the position Canada has repeatedly taken as to sanctions amount to formal and public notice of our attitude." He went on to say that there was a definite possibility that Italy might be forced, by League action, to give up in her attempt to gain control of Ethiopia but "even so, that would not, in my opinion, warrant our continuing to give blank cheque commitments to participate in every fresh trouble that may develop in Europe in the next twenty years".³¹

When the Lapointe statement was announced Mr. Rowell was of course greatly disappointed. He immediately sent a telegram to the Acting Minister of External Affairs protesting this action:

Surprised and disappointed in your statement in the morning papers. Respectfully submit if Government intended to repudiate Riddell should have done so at the time. . . . That all members of the League should prohibit the export of oil and other key materials is their clear and inescapable duty under Article XVI. Any member that refuses to join others in doing so thereby repudiates its solemn obligation and betrays the League and the cause of international justice. I cannot believe that it is the intention of the government to do this or be a party to it.³²

He went on to deal with Lapointe's attempt to justify Canadian action by reference to the stand taken in relation to Article X. This, he maintained, was of no significance,

³¹ Rowell Papers, O. D. Skelton to N. W. Rowell, October 21, 1935.

³² Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to E. Lapointe, December 2, 1935.

because the actions being taken resulted from Articles 12, 15 and 16 and there had been no indication that these would not be fulfilled. A statement, with similar content, was given to the press. In this case however he concluded the statement by expressing regret that "the Government is not entitled to the credit of proposing the prohibition of the export of oil and other key materials".³³

Mr. Lapointe replied immediately that the sole purpose of the Government statement was to correct the impression in various places "created by numerous newspaper articles" that Canada was "taking the lead in urging more severe sanctions against Italy and was singling out for inclusion in such sanctions commodities which we do not ourselves export".³⁴ He went on to say that there was no alternative to a public statement and further that there was no intention of altering government policy, or not cooperating with the League or considering on its merits the application of the oil sanction. Mr. Rowell immediately requested from Mr. Lapointe a list of "the numerous newspaper articles, particularly in the past ten days"³⁵ which had been referred to by the Acting Minister of External Affairs. The writer searched the Rowell papers in vain for a reply to this request.

³³ Statement of N. W. Rowell to the Press, December 2, 1935.

³⁴ Rowell Papers, E. Lapointe to N. W. Rowell, December 4, 1935.

³⁵ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to E. Lapointe, December 5, 1935.

Mr. Rowell, in a letter to Mr. Vincent Massey, again expressed surprise that such a statement had been issued and went on to say:

It has produced great indignation among tens of thousands of people in this province. I have no idea of the explanation but my own view is that it represents Dr. Skelton's view. He is away on a holiday with Mr. King and I believe he has persuaded Mr. King to take this course, with possibly some outside pressure from other sources. . . . Mr. King has so consistently professed his adherence to the League that it is difficult to understand the present public statement.³⁶

There was a similar sentiment expressed in a message to Dr. Riddell in which he noted that Dr. Riddell had been sacrificed to "some political exigencies of which we have no knowledge".³⁷

In addition to the concern about the future of the League there was on Rowell's part concern about the fortunes of the Liberal Party. He seems to have been very anxious to impress upon his fellow Liberals the magnitude of this error and convince them that their handling of this problem would have unfortunate consequences. The official objection sent to Lapointe was followed by a message to Finance Minister Dunning asking for a meeting with him to discuss oil sanctions: "I think you may find it difficult to appreciate the intensity of the feeling that has been stirred up by

³⁶ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to V. Massey, December 3, 1935.

³⁷ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to W. A. Riddell, December 3, 1935.

the Government statement on this point."³⁸ A short time later, however, he noted that the "public indignation" over the Lapointe statement would not be too significant politically because the people had become so much more incensed by the Hoare-Laval pacts. This also muffled the indignation of those who had objected because the British Government was being deserted.

Rowell himself seems to have been considerably pacified. In a letter to J. B. Coyne he mentioned that he had talked the whole matter over with Mr. King who "intimated that the Government was not opposed to sanctions but would support them". He went on to say: "I am inclined to think that the public protests against the Government's announcement has brought them around to see that this is the only course for them to pursue."³⁹ Thus Rowell had observed closely a foreign policy with which he disagreed, and believed all good Liberals disagreed, and yet emerged convinced that what was actually a return to Liberal foreign policy was a momentary lapse in League support and that in the future Canadian policy would lie in the direction of collective security.

The most plausible analysis of what happened was made by another League supporter, Mack Eastman. In a letter to J. W. Dafoe, Eastman suggested that even if Canada "was

³⁸ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to Finance Minister Dunning, December 5, 1935.

³⁹ Rowell Papers, N. W. Rowell to J. B. Coyne, December 23, 1935.

afraid of its own courage" still Ottawa "might have done its disavowing more gracefully".⁴⁰ He pointed out that all that would have been required was for the Government to ask Riddell to make the "necessary explanations" to the press in Geneva. He then went on to say that what had surprised him most was the delay in the disavowal. "Neither the Liberal Party nor Dr. Riddell has ever favored a League with power, and for them to propose a sanction which Mussolini had threatened to regard as a military act would have been 'anti historical'. It would have necessitated the profession of a new doctrine, and unhappily Mackenzie King is not ready for that yet."⁴¹

Although the Regina Leader Post did support the League of Nations the support was not nearly as vehement as that of the Winnipeg Free Press. It was in the early stages of the dispute that editorial comment condemned Italy for flouting "both the letter and the spirit of the obligations" undertaken when she signed the Covenant. Ethiopia on the other hand is described as having cooperated in every case and fulfilled her obligations to the best of her ability. As early as July 31 an editorial appeared explaining the articles of the League Covenant which were applicable and pointing out that the League had a duty to fulfill her obligations. While there seemed to be no doubt about the duty

⁴⁰ Dafoe Papers, M. Eastman to J. W. Dafoe, February 24, 1936.

⁴¹ Ibid.

the Post did not seem too optimistic about what would be done. "There is no telling what the League will do, but there is no doubt that most people in Canada hope it is something."⁴²

The Post, like most other League supporters, complained of the lack of information on foreign affairs which was available to the public. "In the meantime, the bulk of Canadians are largely in the dark as to what is going on behind the scenes although the factors exist that might draw Canada into a first class war."⁴³ This was followed by an editorial which pointed out that while Canada's obligations to the League were obvious there had been no statement from the Liberal politicians about these obligations except from N. W. Rowell who had withdrawn from politics.

In the early stages of the crisis the editors of the Leader Post considered Britain to be the only firm supporter of the League. When sanctions were introduced they felt encouraged by the stand taken by Canada and were convinced that the Canadian people approved of strong action. The people of Canada had, they argued, given their consent to participation in League activities in 1919 and now that the crisis had arrived "they are, we think, ready that Canada

⁴² Regina Leader Post, July 31, 1935.

⁴³ Ibid., September 4, 1935.

should fulfill her obligations under the League, pleasant or unpleasant".⁴⁴

During the month of November the Leader Post began to emphasize the need to support Britain as well as the League. When the war clouds began to develop it was the British connection and not the League connection that was used by the Post as justification for Canada's being prepared to become involved in European affairs. At the same time the editors emphasized the fact that it was necessary for Canada to maintain the right to differ with British foreign policy even though in this particular case she might go along. "The right of Canadians to look at it [foreign policy] dispassionately and independently cannot be given up."

When the Lapointe statement had been made objections and criticisms were the order of the day. The editors suggested that the whole problem resulted from government indecision--therefore the delay in repudiating Riddell. The editors had no doubts about what should have been done. "It has to be borne in mind that the League of Nations is a recognized agency of world peace. Canada is committed to it. We are a member of it, and most Canadians seem to think the League is doing the right thing in facing up to Italy vigorously."⁴⁵ A short time later another editorial commented on the "interesting development" from the Riddell

⁴⁴ Ibid., November 1, 1935.

⁴⁵ Ibid., December 6, 1935.

Incident which was the great support for the League and collective security which manifested itself across the country. The editors of the Post fully recognized the possible consequences of economic sanctions but at this time they did not doubt the willingness of Canadians to accept these consequences. "It may be assumed that the people who are willing to support the proposed sanctions are willing that Canada should send troops to Europe or elsewhere."

They gave recognition to other strong opinions on the subject even though they were convinced that a large majority favored strong League support. The Leader Post was one of the few newspapers opposed to the Lapointe statement that did not automatically blame the influence of isolationist Quebec for the "change" in policy. "All over western Canada various individuals, organizations and even political bodies have been arguing for months that by all means Canada must keep out of an European war. They have made much more noise about it than has been heard from Quebec."⁴⁶

After the announcement of the Hoare-Laval Pact the Leader Post was no longer sure of Canadian support. The Canadian attitude was described as "difficult to define" and though a great number of Canadians might favor the League and collective security "whether they would go so far as to fight for them is a matter on which it is impossible to pronounce an opinion".⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., December, 11, 1935.

⁴⁷ Ibid., December 21, 1935.

The Post then supported the League and the League idea but did not have a great deal of faith in it. It was also critical of the lack of interest in foreign affairs in Canada, yet editorially did very little to encourage interest. The editorials were rather few and seldom expressed any strong opinions.

Another western daily which also seemed to give support to the League was the Edmonton Bulletin. However this newspaper had no faith in the survival or the effectiveness of the League. It did hit the mark in pointing out that this was a trial for the League and if in this instance it was not successful then it might as well cease to exist. Certainly these editorials were strong enough to create some controversy and discussion and in that way encourage an interest in foreign affairs.

The crisis was just beginning to develop when an editorial was written expressing the idea that the League was really the only organization that could possibly handle this controversy but in its existing form it would be unable to do it. The League was founded on certain basic assumptions (i.e. strong nations would submit to its advice) and since these had been proven wrong the time had, the editor felt, come for a complete reorganization. Two months later it complained about the inaction of the League, saying that all it had been able to do was prevent Ethiopia from getting arms to defend herself and then tell her to be patient while the Italians prepared to attack. While the

world might not be too interested in what happened to Ethiopia they should be interested in what happens to the League. The following day a similar editorial appeared saying that though the League was on trial "it is by no means likely to do anything but talk" and this would not bother or hinder Mussolini. The League must "assert the binding character of the Briand-Kellogg pact" and "impose the sanctions provided for in the League constitution" if it desires to live.⁴⁸

As the controversy developed the Bulletin began to have greater hopes for the League. On September 17 an editorial commented that "Canadians practically without exception" were willing to prove the strong stand taken by Canada's representatives at Geneva and their promise to act along with the other members of the League. This was, the Bulletin thought, easily justifiable.

Directly there are no Canadian interests at stake in the dispute, and we are as well situated as any other nation to take an attitude of detachment. But in closer contacts of the present no country can contemplate war in any part of the world without recognizing the possibility that it will ultimately become involved.⁴⁹

This was an obvious test case and if the League is to survive the "obligations assumed by its members must be treated as solemn undertakings".

⁴⁸ Edmonton Bulletin, September 7, 1935.

⁴⁹ Ibid., September 17, 1935.

The following day another editorial appeared which discussed the possibility that a war might result from League actions. The fact that the League had indicated it would stand by the Covenant appeared to the Bulletin to be "the one satisfactory thing" in the whole situation. Italy's threat to withdraw did not appear sufficient to deter the League from taking this strong stand because it "might better die standing positively for law and order than live to be despised by great powers and mistrusted by small ones. At least it has tried to do its duty."⁵⁰ On October 9, after Italy had been branded the aggressor there was new hope voiced by the Bulletin. The action was looked upon as a sign that the nations now realized their interdependence and that the League was beginning to display "a courage which it has not hitherto shown".

After the Mackenzie King statement of October 29, the Bulletin described the statement as being in accordance with the "overwhelming will of the people". The promise of support to the League was precisely what the editors believed to be the desire of the people but they did not think there should be any commitments militarily. That question, they argued, could be dealt with when it arose though it did not appear likely to arise unless "the powers take a more decisive stand than they have thus far indicated".

⁵⁰ Ibid., September 20, 1935.

As the crisis continued the Bulletin was discouraged by the slowness of the League in taking action. It recognized that the fact that the nations were working together was praiseworthy but that it would really do little good when Mussolini had taken all the territory he desired at this particular time. In regard to Italian threats of withdrawal there was no question that it would be regrettable but it would be better to allow them to go than to forsake the League principles on collective security which was receiving its first display of support.

When the oil sanctions proposal began to complicate world affairs in the latter part of November, the Bulletin gave approval to the suggestion of an oil sanction even though it had caused a crisis. It pointed out that Canada certainly did not desire war but if sanctions were applied in order to prevent an act of aggression it would be impossible to criticize very heavily the Canadian representative for proposing the addition of the commodity which was most likely to bring the desired result. However, a few days later, after the Lapointe statement, the Bulletin had changed its tune. It was then of the opinion that the whole thing was Europe's problem and it was therefore up to the European nations to propose what commodities should be added to the sanctions list. There should also be arrangements made whereby "Canada's representative at Geneva will in future say what he has instructions to say, and no more". This did not mean that the Bulletin disagreed with

the introduction of oil sanctions. On December 4, in editorial comment, it said that the important thing now was for the sanctions committee to approve the oil sanction and then its responsibility would become that of the League and ~~not of~~ any individual nation. And again on December 9 they said ". . . if the League of Nations really wants to halt the war in East Africa they had better sanction oil and everything else Mussolini needs in his business of conquest."⁵¹

After the announcement of the Hoare-Laval Pact the Bulletin indicated a great unhappiness about it all. It was described as being "unpleasantly like cold-blooded treachery". And a few days later they complained that the League Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact had been suspended "for the accomodation of one country" and this seemed impossible without it losing all its meaning.

The strongest newspaper support for the League came from the Winnipeg Free Press but this must be attributed at least in part to the fact that the editor, J. W. Dafoe, was such a strong believer in the League of Nations. The Regina Leader Post and the Edmonton Bulletin provided additional support to the League but both newspapers were far more concerned with the domestic situation and the federal election than with foreign affairs. Probably the most frightening opposition to Liberal Party policy on League matters, and especially the repudiation of Riddell, came from such influential individuals as J. W. Dafoe,

⁵¹ Ibid., December 9, 1935.

T. A. Crerar, J. B. Coyne, and N. W. Rowell. These men all seemed convinced that with some leadership the Canadian people would give their wholehearted support to the League but all eventually accepted the party line on the matter. In any case the storm of protest when the Lapointe statement appeared in the press was sufficient to cause the Prime Minister to issue an explanatory statement a few days later and on several occasions in the following years he seemed to think it necessary to explain again this action.

CHAPTER IV

PRO-BRITISH NEWSPAPER OPINION DURING THE CRISIS

Demands for a firm stand by Canada came also from a considerable segment of the population who believed this to be a method of supporting Great Britain. This group made itself heard from the beginning of the crisis and it was evident that these Canadians would support any action which was in accord with British policy. The significance of this lies in the fact that these people believed the British policy to be one of strong League support and consequently viewed the Lapointe statement as a desertion of the mother country. It seems quite possible that this support would have made it possible for the Canadian Government to support Riddell and thus make the Hoare-Laval Pact less likely.

Probably the strongest support for this point of view came from The Toronto Globe, another regular source of support for the Liberal Party. From the early stages of the crisis on, The Globe appeared convinced that the League would fail. On July 5 the opinion was expressed that if any kind of war broke out with Abyssinia it would mean "the end of the League of Nations as it now exists". A few days later, however, a slightly more optimistic note was sounded. The optimism was based on reports that Great

Britain had just consulted the Dominions as to what British policy in the League should be. This, the editors felt, had the effect of demonstrating to Europe "that in international matters she (The British Empire) moves as an Imperial Unit and not as an individual power". The influence of Great Britain was going to save the League and the world.

Hopes of maintaining peace through League action appeared to The Globe to be vain. In editorial comment of July 17 the League supporters were branded as idealistic.

They refuse to recognize the League as nothing more than an international assembly whose membership is optional, governed by the political aspirations of the strong, rendered impotent by the trivial differences of the weak, and resting on foundations of victorious power with nothing but the massed threat of a valuable band of allies for its force and at the same time dependent on rather than independent of, the internal interests of each.¹

On the following day, however, the editors recognized public opinion "as the greatest deterrent of war in the world today". There was no suggestion that the League might be used to direct or channel that public opinion nor was there any indication that this might be necessary before public opinion could become an effective deterrent.

When the suggestion was made that Italian war preparations should be blocked by closing the Suez Canal The Globe considered this inadvisable. The editors noted that national sentiment and patriotism were everywhere being stirred up and therefore "common sense and logic do not account for a

¹ The Toronto Globe, July 17, 1935.

great deal". Under these conditions the closing of the Suez would simply delay the implementation of Mussolini's plans and in the meantime increase the already great tensions of Europe.

Early August saw The Globe devoting many editorials to the criticisms of the League. When Ethiopia appealed to the League Council and the Council had "passed the buck" to Britain and France, the editors considered this another display of cowardice and extremely ridiculous in view of the fact that it was well known that these two countries were supporting opposing parties in this struggle. Probably the most valid criticism of League action came as a result of the acceptance of the principle of Three Power Talks. It was correctly pointed out that the talks were based on the Treaty of 1906 which Ethiopia did not recognize and the League had formerly declared to be illegal. No particular notice was taken of the position of Great Britain in these negotiations.

Some hopes were expressed later by The Globe that all the failures of the League would not lead to its disintegration but rather a reemergence along slightly different lines. One of the greatest problems faced by the League, the editors argued, was that the Covenant was drawn up to preserve the status quo and the status quo as it was when the Covenant was accepted was not worthy of preserving.

It is the hatreds bred by the territorial revisions, the injustices of racial and religious divisions, the inequalities which the peace settlement forced on Europe and

which the League is sworn to protect that has destroyed League Unity and the "overwhelming superiority" by which it was to enforce its justice upon the recalcitrant nations.²

On August 12 the editors of The Globe considered the answer to the dilemma to be "obvious". The League as such was not showing any intention of really supporting the Covenant. The only solution appeared to be to "empower" Great Britain, on its behalf, to act as she sees fit in the Suez Canal or elsewhere. The following day the editors returned to their speculations concerning the results of closing the Suez. They concluded that if Great Britain were to take this step they would not likely get more than "moral support" from Geneva. However, they still felt that Britain would have to take a stand because of an eventual clash with the Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean and "the life of the Empire" depended upon British supremacy in this area. It was in recognition of this fact that Britain was consulting the Dominions on policy. On September 3, The Globe returned to its consideration of alternatives and arrived at a similar answer. The editors considered that she could either continue to support "that glorified and impractical idealism of Geneva, which she alone has upheld in Europe" or she could "return to her former isolationism and in this manner hold the balance of power".³

² Ibid., August 21, 1935.

³ Ibid., September 3, 1935.

Periodically, The Globe considered what Canada's position would be if Britain became involved in war with Italy. There seemed to the editors to be no doubt that Canada could "decline to send troops" but this would only be theoretical neutrality because Canada "is a blood ally of Great Britain to any enemy and equally an enemy to them". They went on to argue that intervention would, under the circumstances, be the "lesser risk" as the British Empire loomed as the "last hope of freedom and democracy".

Though critical of League action and quick to call any backing down cowardice, The Globe opposed the imposition of strong sanctions when this was first discussed. The first editorial on the subject scoffed at the people who were so naive as to believe that there could be economic sanctions without war. The only possibility that sanctions might be successful depended on "the show of British might". It appeared more likely to the editors that the effect of sanctions would be to "remake the political map of Europe and send fascism and its allies headlong into war - not immediately perhaps, but soon".⁴

Concern was also expressed by The Globe about the possible effect of this struggle on the over-all European situation. On October 1 a warning was given that if sanctions were going to drive Italy into union with Germany then sanctions must be avoided at all costs. A union between

⁴ Ibid., September 18, 1935.

these two countries had two dangerous facets. "Fascist Europe at war with democratic Europe is the Soviet dream of a short cut to world communism. Even a gesture toward military sanctions could disturb the Fascist volcano."⁵ The day following Italy's attack on Ethiopia another editorial appeared urging the League members not to impose sanctions and suggesting that the only hope lay with Great Britain and France. They also argued that there was no principle left except "the principle of peace for Europe" because all the other principles ceased to exist when the League became meaningless after the withdrawal of Japan and Germany. What Mussolini was battling was called "only the ghost of what the idealists sought to raise".

When the crisis began to worsen The Globe renewed its attacks on the League. They viewed the "present atmosphere in itself an indictment of the League". The editors felt that the League had accomplished nothing in the way of eliminating the causes of war and "the collective security it offers is an unreliable, unstable grouping of nations dependent on equally unstable governments".⁶ The following day there appeared the first major criticism of the British stand. Concern was expressed that Mr. Baldwin would do what was politically good for him and this was dangerous since the British people were foolish enough to have faith in Geneva.

⁵ Ibid., September 3, 1935.

⁶ Ibid., October 24, 1935.

Disavowal of Riddell by Lapointe was as strongly criticized by The Globe as it was by those newspapers supporting the League. The first criticism was of the manner in which the announcement was made. If the announcement was necessary then it should have come from Dr. Riddell since it had not been made at the appropriate time, which was much earlier. It was pointed out incidentally that in view of the statement of Prime Minister King on October 29, reaffirming Canada's support of the League, the statement by Dr. Riddell did not seem unreasonable. The Globe was not, however, concerned about the weakening of the League as a result. The real danger resulting from the statement was that it might be looked upon as an indication of a division in Empire policy and it was up to the government to eliminate that danger.

The December 4th and 6th issues of The Globe carried front page editorials in criticism of government action. The theme of the criticism was: "How can an Administration expect to retain confidence at home or abroad if the acts of its official spokesmen cannot be accepted at once as authoritative". The whole effect of the statement was to "muddy the peace waters" and no matter how it was viewed it appeared to be bungling of the worst kind. Only reaffirmation of Empire solidarity could be used to minimize the effects of the statement. "For the sake of world peace, of Empire solidarity and her own integrity, it is Canada's duty to rectify this error by showing that she is working

wholeheartedly with the United Kingdom".⁷ The Globe returned to the attack again on December 7 with another front page editorial. "It will be unfortunate if some convincing reason for repudiating Dr. Riddell's action is not produced, or if the government does not admit frankly that its statement was ill-advised and inexcusable".⁸ The editors pointed out that Canada had appeared willing enough to go along with sanctions against Italy as long as the steps taken were not having any effect but as soon as the proposal for something effective was produced the Canadian Government tried to avoid any responsibility. The Globe did not at this time lay the blame for this action on Quebec. "There has been no objection raised, in Canada, to the oil embargo to influence the government; let this also go forth."

Rather surprisingly The Globe came out with an editorial on December 9 which called for Canadian support of the League and went so far as to indicate a desire for Canadian leadership in promoting League action. "Is there any reason why, in a matter of so great importance to the world Canada should wait for any other nation to take the lead?" From there the editors went on to point out that the explanation that repudiation of Riddell was necessary because the proposal was being branded as "Canada's proposal" was ridiculous because it would have been to Canada's

⁷ Ibid., December 4, 1935.

⁸ Ibid., December 7, 1935.

credit "to take this much leadership in behalf of peace". This seemingly unqualified support of the League was explained the following day in a front page editorial which identified League support with the support of Great Britain. They recognized that a "certain section" of Canadian public opinion was satisfied with the Lapointe statement but "this is not Canada's true voice". Canadians were most anxious that the world know how they really felt about the whole incident. ". . . the Canadians as a whole resent the inference that this country is not loyal to its obligations".⁹ There was no discussion at this time as to whether sanctions did or did not form part of Canada's obligations.

The Globe then returned to its criticisms of League actions in the early stages of the crisis and reemphasized their belief that the real hope was strong British action and that Canadians should aid the mother country in the implementation of any policy. However, there seems to have been a strong feeling, on the part of the editors, when the Hoare-Laval Pact had been announced, that it would have been better to have supported the League more strongly in the earlier stages of the crisis.

The Vancouver Province emphasized the need for support of the British position which seemed to them also to be identical with the League position. This newspaper was, however, far more concerned with the domestic depression

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Ibid., December 10, 1935.

and election than it was with what transpired in the field of foreign affairs.

During August The Province expressed very little hope for the survival of the League though it was recognized that the League represented the strongest if not the only hope for maintaining peace. Their reason for pessimism was that they were convinced that the people would not recognize that it might be necessary for the League to engage in war. "Public opinion of civilization is against Mussolini but it is also strong for keeping the peace." Their hopes were somewhat raised when the British Cabinet held a special meeting and also later when consultation with the Dominions and the United States took place. This was viewed as the only method by which the League could survive the test that Mussolini was determined to administer. At the same time The Province warned that care would have to be taken not to allow the struggle to develop as one between Britain and Italy. They felt that traditional Italo-British friendship could be sacrificed for the League but not for Ethiopia. This position was reemphasized by The Province in commenting on the suggestion that rather than impose sanctions against Italy, to cut off her supplies, the Suez Canal should be closed. This they opposed because the responsibility "would inevitably pass from the shoulders of the League of Nations to those of Great Britain".

During the month of September The Province speculated as to whether or not sanctions would be applied, and if they were applied, what Canada's role would be. The editors

did not see fit, at this time, to recommend any particular policy or policies for Canada unless it was a policy of "wait and see". They recognized that if the League was going to survive and stop Mussolini there would have to be sanctions. However, there could be no hope of success in applying sanctions unless they had the support of international public opinion. The editors also indicated some doubt about the success of sanctions because the League machinery was so cumbersome and they also warned that "the powderkeg" might explode with the result being a world war. Only time could provide the answers to all these questions. In speculating about what Canada would do (at this time The Province did not talk about what Canada should do) a similar answer was reached. The editors were quite convinced that if the decision were left to Mackenzie King he would call Parliament before introducing sanctions. It was not easy to determine what Bennett would do but he would definitely not get Canada embroiled in a foreign war. The only rather clear cut comment made on behalf of Canada was made by Howard Ferguson at Geneva when he stated that the League was looked upon by Canada as "the cornerstone of peace". However, this was of no great help to the editors of The Province in trying to determine the probable path of Canadian action. Surprisingly, they did not seem greatly disturbed, at this time, by the indeterminate state of Canadian policy.

Speculation, by The Province, as to whether the League would survive this test or not, continued throughout October. It appeared obvious that Britain would stand by the League but it remained to be seen whether or not the other nations would side with her. As for Canada's voice the editors now considered that it had "been quite plain on this question which affects the peace of the world and the future of the League".¹⁰ This voice, though not loud, had clearly been in support of the League. The editors also argued that the quiet nature of Canada's voice was entirely justifiable since she was in the midst of an election campaign and elections should not be fought on questions of foreign policy. Isolationist opinion, which presented the view that Britain was simply using the League to prevent other countries from doing what Britain did colonially years earlier, was entirely unjustified and served only to weaken the League.

The same pattern was followed by The Province in editorial comment on the Lapointe statement. It was suggested by the editors that Mussolini was frightened enough, by the threat of further sanctions, so that he would have been prepared to back down. Consequently the announcement seemed perplexing and the time chosen to make it was the most unfortunate possible from the point of view of the League. Canada had gained a certain amount of prestige through Dr. Riddell's suggestion but all this and more had been lost

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The Vancouver Province, October 14, 1935.

by the repudiation. There must surely have been some way of "protecting Canada's interests without suggesting division in the Empire and division in the League and so lessening the League's drive for peace."¹¹ The December 2 editorial went on to say that the King Government was quite correct in pointing out that before Canada would enter a war Parliament would have to be consulted but in their view the Parliament of Canada had already accepted the obligations of the Covenant and did not need to be consulted again. The editors also pointed out that standing by the League in the long run would mean peace whereas shirking obligations would lead to war.

The stand taken by The Province became confused by December 13. The Hoare-Laval Pact appeared in many respects to be foolish but it was nevertheless condoned on the grounds that it was at least an attempt to "stay above ice". The recognition that British policy was not complete support of the League did not alter the determination of The Province to support British policy. It was suggested that the whole problem be reconsidered and that it might then become apparent that by supporting British policy the world would avoid "holding Ethiopia too high" and thus becoming embroiled in a world war. The editors made no mention at this time of their earlier predictions that Mussolini would give in if sanctions were enforced.

¹¹ Ibid., December 2, 1935.

The Saint-John Telegraph Journal while giving its support to British policy peculiarly sympathized with Italy. The British Empire was viewed as the only unit in international politics that had any moral standard or was worth backing but for a variety of reasons it seemed unwise to block Italian ambitions in Africa.

An editorial on June 21 visualized the possibility of an Italian defeat at the hands of Ethiopia but this seemed to be most undesirable because it "would be a blow to white prestige throughout Africa". On the other hand an Italian victory seemed no more desirable because this would create "serious complications with both Great Britain and France". It seemed likely that even if hostilities between European nations could be avoided in this case conflicting interests would probably arise later. A short time later an editorial was devoted to criticizing those who so readily laid the blame for the whole controversy on Italy's doorstep. The point was made that it was impossible to endure the presence of savage tribes on a frontier and in this case if Ethiopia was unable to keep these tribes under control then Italy must take some steps. It did not appear fair for people far away from the danger of attacks by these savage tribes to "think pityingly of the poor deluded savage" when they have not experienced the finding of "the body of a comrade who may have fallen wounded, mangled and mutilated in an obscene and horrible way". In considering the Ethiopian appeals to the League described earlier the Telegraph

Journal argued that "a genuine attempt at arbitration or direct negotiation" should have been made first and Ethiopia was only rushing matters by taking the problem to the League at that time. The editors also felt that the League had been so anxious to be fair to the smaller nations that she had been unfair to some of the stronger ones and it would not have been the least bit surprising if Italy had left the League at this time.

During the month of July the editorials of the Telegraph Journal expressed concern that the League was going to draw Britain into a conflict which she desired to avoid. This appeared particularly ridiculous because most of the other League members had no intention of taking their pledges seriously. The suggestion was made that Britain should withdraw her support from the League and proceed on her own way by strengthening her position outside of the League.

Thereafter she might well stiffen up Imperial defense, if possible in close collaboration with the United States,¹² and it might even be with Germany.

A short time later the smaller states were criticized for attempting to force the League to deal with the dispute "and preserve Ethiopian integrity". This, the editors considered to be ridiculous because these nations had "no responsibility and nothing at stake in the affair and yet they have evidently prejudged the case". Further:

They take no account of the fact that Abyssinia has failed to apply central

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The Saint-John Telegraph Journal, July 17, 1935.

authority; that border raiding in British, French and Italian territory has been flagrant and that she has failed to abolish slavery . . . The whole case should at least be heard before the smaller nations start raising their voices.¹³

At the end of July the Telegraph-Journal returned to pleading Italy's case though they recognized the case was weakening. It was pointed out that Italy was in great need of outlets for her large population as well as needing some sources of raw materials. The editors went on to suggest that if, instead of showing such determination to get territory by fair means or foul, Italy would plead her case properly and reasonably "others will see the necessity and arrange the affairs somehow". It was, in their view, because Italy was showing such determination that the other nations "who have invested themselves with the halo of Geneva idealism are obliged at least to profess horror". The following day the Telegraph-Journal changed its approach and began to condemn Italian action. The League was now urged to stand firm as the Italian threats seemed to be just a bluff and the League had a duty to perform and it could not allow "fear nor favor" to influence it.

Proposals for a Three Power Conference placed too great responsibilities on the shoulders of Britain and France. The Telegraph-Journal felt that neither nation had enough at stake to use armed force and the only other way to prevent hostilities was for "others to assist by a combination of firmness and goodwill". Chances of the

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Ibid., July 20, 1935.

League taking a strong stand, however, seemed remote in view of the "almost apologetic" moves which had been taken up to this time. The only nations that had consistently backed the League so far were the British nations and they had been very careful and compromising in their attitude and they tried to avoid offending anyone. The rest of the nations gave their support to the League only when it suited them and consequently there was no way of telling whether these nations intended to support the League or resort to the old power politics. The Telegraph-Journal considered Canada's attitude to be determined by the fact that the government and the people recognized that it was not possible simply to brush aside the affairs of other nations particularly when they affected the British Empire. The editors were quite convinced that "Canadians in general are ready to lend a hand and support the Old Country" but that there would be very serious consideration before consent would be given to interference in world affairs on any other grounds.

When the September meeting of the Council was about to begin the Telegraph-Journal renewed its attack on the stand taken by the smaller countries who professed to be great supporters of the League only because they were well aware that they would never be called upon to prove this point. It appeared inevitable that it would be the Great Powers that shouldered the responsibility of preventing the flouting of the League's authority. It was the small countries in the League that had "made a fetish of the status quo" and it was therefore in no way fair to ask the

Great Powers to defend this position. A few days later they began to center their attack on the slowness and idealism of the League.

The Geneva mills groan much and grind little. The whole machinery moves so slowly that it is highly likely that Italy will have determined the solution to the problem before the League begins to act. This is another case in which the idealists and reformers and those who would reconstruct human nature will find that old methods have their uses.¹⁴

In the following two weeks the Telegraph-Journal proposed two methods of operation for the League if it was going to survive. The first suggestion was that the League would have to take a strong stand and not yield to Italy "against reason and justice" as it would then be "of less than no value in cases of this sort". If the League failed to stand by its ideals and allowed the threat of Italian withdrawal to deter it from taking action it seemed obvious that Britain and the Dominions would resign. Nothing could weaken the League more than if it allowed Italy's threats to deter action. However, only one week later the editors proposed another method by which the League might survive. They pointed out that the League was a little too idealistic and though it accomplished a great deal the point had been reached where greater caution was necessary in determining what policy to follow.

If it is not to dissolve in a war caused by its own idealism it must reform itself and limit itself to discussions in terms

¹⁴ Ibid., September 12, 1935.

that all nations understand and accept. It is up to the League to save itself because at present it is rushing toward self-destruction.¹⁵

Three days later the editors returned to the idea that the way for the League to survive was for it to "stand firm, really firm". Mussolini seemed to be wavering and looking for a compromise and this was the time for the League to be firm and let him know what it was like to be told that there was no compromise possible. Thus, the Telegraph-Journal had completed the circle in the space of two weeks - first proposing a strong stand then suggesting extreme caution and compromise and finally returning to the idea of firmness and no compromise.

Canadian obligations, according to the Telegraph-Journal, were to support wholeheartedly the mother country if she were to be drawn into war with Italy. However, the editors emphasized that this was not because of the British Empire or anything like that but rather because Canada was a signatory to the Covenant of the League. "It is quite unthinkable that they (The British Dominions) will in any way try to evade their obligations". However, though the editors made a point of Canada's obligations under the Covenant the emphasis remained on action by the British Empire as a unit.

When sanctions came under discussion the Telegraph-Journal was quick to point out that it was not enough to

¹⁵ Ibid., September 13, 1935.

refuse to supply only munitions. Economic sanctions would have to apply to all trade and financial relations with the aggressor and half-sanctions would be entirely useless. There seemed no doubt that the British nations would do their part in the application of sanctions but this would be done only so long as "the League spirit is maintained".

Speculation as to how much support France was willing to give to the League led the Telegraph-Journal to the conclusion that it would be best for Britain to forget about the League and concentrate on strengthening the British Empire. On September 16 the editors were optimistic as a result of France's announcement that she would back sanctions but a week later there appeared to be some doubt as to whether or not the decision had actually been made. "France is still in trepidation and is not even now to be relied upon for League support as regards sanctions in full . . ." A few days later warning was given that Britain would not support the League if other nations did not; and then a few days later France was severely criticized because her attitude had destroyed all hope for successful League action.

Why should it be necessary for Britain to have to ask France what she will do if Italy were to attack British forces acting in support of the League? There is no question about France's obligations; she must come to the aid of Britain forthwith; indeed she must already be acting in concert with Britain . . .¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., October 2, 1935.

This was followed by the suggestion that, since it was obviously not worth while to associate with nations such as this, it would be best to strengthen Empire ties and strengthen relations with the United States.

On October 2 the Telegraph-Journal returned to urging that Italy's difficulties be considered in light of her urgent needs and the provocations she had suffered at the hands of Ethiopia. Only two days later, however, they had themselves, returned to attacking Italy. "Shall we be dragged into the misery of war because a greedy dictatorship of dubious mental balance starts out on a predatory campaign in defiance of the nations". After this criticism the suggestion was made that the League act quickly and strongly regardless of the impossibility of predicting the nature of the reaction of Italy to such a move.

After the outbreak of hostilities the Telegraph-Journal returned to urging that Canada and the British Empire play their part in implementing sanctions. This would simply be a method of challenging the other League members to do their part in making the League an effective instrument for peace. The editors seemed quite convinced that Canada would do her share and take a strong stand. "One thing is sure; Canada will honor her obligations as a Member of the League. If that involves her in war it will be deplorable, but she will enter it conscious that she is doing her duty."¹⁷ They did not explain the basis

¹⁷ Ibid., October 4, 1935.

for their conclusion that Canada would "stand by her obligations".

Throughout November the editorials continued to urge strong sanctions, and strong support for them, by Canada. They recognized that the framers of the Covenant had intended that sanctions be strong, and further, that to make them strong was the only way to avert war in the future even though in the present case hostilities might be prolonged. There was no precedent to which they could look to determine the probable effects of these economic pressures since even though economic pressures had been used before they were of a radically different kind, and consequently, there was a great deal to be learned in this "experiment". The editors pointed out that any action at all by the League was "a pleasant surprise to many", but the point had been reached where measures were absolutely necessary to prevent the continuation of the violating of treaty obligations.

The Telegraph-Journal gave complete approval and support to the proposal of an oil sanction when it was announced. After discussing Canada's proposal and indicating that the Committee of Eighteen had approved it in principle an editorial went on to describe the proposal. "The proposal is perfectly logical; these are really key products for making munitions of war, and their addition to the present list would make sanctions a great deal more effective."¹⁸ They

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Ibid., November 6, 1935.

recognized that some unfortunate disruptions in trade would result but this simply indicated that sanctions should be made effective so as to shorten the duration of the disruption. To make sanctions effective would of course require the cooperation of all League members and some non-members. The editors urged that support should not be lessened simply because of Mussolini's threat of war - in fact this should lead to greater support since it indicates Italy's Achilles Heel and would mean that the crisis could be brought "to a speedy end". The possibility of war was by no means overlooked but rather looked upon as a necessary risk. It seemed quite possible that Mussolini would believe that unless he gained a victory at this time he would be finished as a dictator, and for this reason, he might be willing to plunge Italy into an insane war.

Continual postponing of the full discussion of the oil problem was considered very disturbing by the Telegraph-Journal. The first postponement was considered to be: "vaguely disappointing, the more so as the United States has shown a disposition to put on pressure to stop oil shipments". The following day the editors took comfort in British reaffirmation of support for the proposal as well as the belief that since the League had started on the road to sanctions there was no turning back. The risks involved were known before the League took action so Mussolini's warning should not delay action. It was unfortunate, according to the editors, that a delay was caused by the need

for the cooperation of the United States but now that this had been promised there seemed to be no reason for expecting any further delays.

The Telegraph-Journal did not react as strongly to the Lapointe statement as did most of the newspapers. On December 3 the comment was made that the credit for the oil sanctions proposal had been given to Dr. Riddell by Ottawa and that this appeared to be only reasonable since it was his proposal and was not by instruction from Ottawa. Canada should, however, be proud "that the plan which Britain supports enthusiastically, France accepts if Mussolini will not stop the war and in which the United States will cooperate, is that of a Canadian".¹⁹ This was followed the next day by an editorial which commented that there was really no mystery involved as Dr. Riddell had general instructions which "presumably were to comply with the Covenant pledges and specifically to support economic sanctions". This was interpreted by the Canadian representative "as entitling him to make suggestions that would have the effect of making sanctions effective". This the editors concluded was only reasonable and it did not seem logical to them that one country would get the blame for such action. Action was suggested by a Committee and sanctions were to be applied by all nations. There seemed to be no reason for Ottawa's "semi-apologetic disclaimer" of Dr. Riddell's act. The

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Ibid., December 3, 1935.

editors urged that Canada should not be afraid of her own greatness.

The Halifax Chronicle also pleaded for strong support of Britain by Canada. There was, however, no indication of any sympathy for Italy or Italian needs and claims. Ethiopia had been content to operate within her own borders and all this difficulty was "brought to her gates from without". Ethiopia's position was recognized as being very difficult if not impossible. The League seemed to be doing nothing; Ethiopia herself was prevented from buying arms, the United States had indicated that she would do nothing, and Great Britain could hardly be expected to shoulder all of the responsibility alone.

Italian claims, that they were now doing what Britain had done much earlier, and that the only reason Britain was not continuing this policy was that she had all the territory she wanted, were described as ridiculous by the Halifax Chronicle. The situation had changed entirely from the time of British conquests, especially in that campaigns previously were extremely limited in scope while now "the world is closely knit into one great international economic unit and the suffering of one brings trouble upon all". In the crisis Britain was leaving no stone unturned in her attempt to establish peace. It appeared to the editors that most of the burden of maintaining peace was falling upon Britain and while it was impossible for Britain to do all of this herself there appeared to be hope that a combination of factors

would make it possible to establish peace. Throughout July the Chronicle devoted considerable news and editorial space to the crisis. The constant theme was that the British position was extremely difficult because of lack of support but Britain would do her best to prevent Italy from committing this crime even if it completely destroyed the traditional British-Italian friendship.

In early August the Chronicle criticized those who suggested that Canada's position should be one of neutrality since this was simply a refusal to face facts. It seemed possible that neutrality was compatible with Canada's status as a North American power but even this was doubtful because the world had become so small neutrality was not compatible with Canada's commitments in the League and certainly "if Britain were engaged, no matter what the feelings of the Canadian people might be, they would find it exceedingly difficult to remain neutral and remain within the Empire".²⁰ The editors did not seem to consider it possible that Canadians might be willing to forsake the Empire in order to avoid going to war.

The Chronicle was the only newspaper read in this study which noted the unsatisfactory position of the Canadian representative at Geneva long before the difficulties of Dr. Riddell were revealed. On August 14 an editorial pointed out that the method used by Canada for choosing a representative to the League was most unsatisfactory and

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The Halifax Chronicle, August 8, 1935.

even when selected the editors did not consider him to be in a position where he really knew what to do. A plea for a change was made. "To carry weight, Canada's representative should be in a position to speak with authority, and there should be some continuity as among other countries represented." Unfortunately this suggestion went unheeded.

Throughout August, September and October the Chronicle continued to devote considerable news and editorial space to the crisis. The editorials gave great credit to Emperor Selassie for behaving in such an honorable way. Hope was expressed that the nations of the world would rally to the support of the League and Britain, the League's main supporter up to this time. The suggestion was never made that Canada should keep out of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

In commenting on the repudiation of Riddell the Chronicle criticisms were relatively mild. The first suggestion made was that if it was necessary to make such a statement a more opportune time could have been found. Almost any other time would have been more opportune in their view. The editors admitted being confused as to the exact nature of the position held by Canada's representative to the League. "We do not properly understand how Canada's representative could speak at Geneva without speaking for Canada." However, in editorial comment on the Prime Minister's explanation of the Lapointe statement a few days later there was no indication of disapproval. The editorial was simply a report of what the Prime Minister had said.

When the Hoare-Laval episode became news the Chronicle showed its disapproval without any strong criticism of Britain.

The League of Nations bound itself to discipline the aggressor nation which made war in defiance of its pledges, not to give him legal title to a sovereign nation's lands and reward his military adventure.²¹

This appears to be giving the League the responsibility of correcting a situation caused by the faithlessness of some of its members though the Chronicle did not recognize this fact.

Early editorial comment, by the Ottawa Journal, on the developing crisis indicated a pessimistic attitude about the possibility of successful actions by the League of Nations. The editors were convinced that the world of diplomacy had not changed very much and consequently the most desirable policy to pursue would be one of preparation for war.

We may hold, and logically, that the League although falling short of its goal, is still the world's best hope. But, if we are realists, if we are willing to face the truth we must know that war and the things of war have not been banished, that readiness and preparation to defend its borders are among the first duties of a state.²²

The Journal complained that too much of the responsibility of maintaining world peace was falling on the shoulders of England. It appeared preposterous that there should

²¹ Ibid., December 12, 1935.

²² Ottawa Journal, July 23, 1935.

be daily cables informing the world that tensions were increasing while only Britain was making any effort to prevent open war.

Well we can't see that it is the duty of England or of the British Empire either, to police the world. England has done a lot of that in her day; and it seems about time that some of the other nations, the nations that talk so loudly about peace, including the United States, should take a hand in the matter.²³

A short while later the editors pointed out that, while the League was debating the situation, England was being forced closer and closer to a war - a war which would lead to difficulties in Britain's African colonies regardless of the outcome.

On September 3 the Journal suggested that there was very little possibility of League action. In commenting on a speech given by Mr. Rowell before the Canadian Bar Association it was argued that the situation had changed so much since the Covenant was accepted that it was naive to expect the various member nations to honor their obligations. Japan and Germany had resigned and the United States had never joined so it was not to be expected that sanctions, which assumed over-all participation, would be implemented. Eight days later in an editorial entitled "Nonsensical War Talk" the editors applauded the decision of politicians to keep away from the discussion of this crisis in the election campaign since the chances seemed

²³ Ibid., July 26, 1935.

to be "one in a thousand" that the League would decide upon any action that would lead to an outbreak of hostilities.

When Canada's responsibilities and probable actions were discussed the Journal was quite critical. It was recognized that Canada would not be called upon immediately to take any definite steps especially since Canada had on several occasions "made it clear that its League obligations do not commit this country to interference in any war that may break out in any part of the world . . ." On September 18 the Journal expressed the opinion that the Canadian people generally were dissatisfied with the steps taken by the government up to this point.

We sit sucking our thumbs almost in silence despite our pledge to the League and despite our nominal British connection. Is this really what we Canadians feel? The Journal does not believe so. The Journal believes that if any Canadian political leader would proclaim both that he stands squarely by the League of Nations and above all that he is British as well as Canadian and holds that this country is British for better or for worse, war or no war, he would be greeted with a roar of acclaim from the best part of the Canadian people.²⁴

Again a few days later a similar stand was taken in commenting upon a statement in The London Daily Mail which suggested that Canada's indecisiveness and the weakness of Ferguson's statement at Geneva indicated that sanctions would split the British Empire. The editors were convinced that the Canadian people would be most unhappy with this since most of them recognized the support of the British

²⁴Ibid., September 18, 1935.

Empire, and fulfillment of commitments to the League, as a "plain duty".

Sanctions were welcomed by the Journal as the best instrument the League had at its disposal for keeping the peace. On November 26 comment was made about the continual postponement of the extension of sanctions to include oil, iron and coal. Without these items included sanctions seemed futile. After the repudiation of Riddell the editors were extremely critical of the political leadership of the country which seemed "so desperately anxious not to offend those parts of our population which prefer to subsist in the charity of Great Britain and the United States for national existence rather than take any international responsibilities,

. . ."²⁵ When the Prime Minister issued his explanatory statement the editors considered it insufficient since there were so many other ways of getting the same idea across without all the unfortunate repercussions. The Hoare-Laval Pact was not severely criticized by the Journal but after it was announced the attack on the rest of the world for leaving too much to Britain was renewed.

The Montreal Gazette was not very optimistic about the possibility of the League preventing the Italian invasion of Ethiopia but as the crisis dragged on it appeared to the editors that only the League with the leadership of Britain could stop Mussolini. There was no doubt that Italy was to blame for the problems. A constant theme in the

²⁵ Ibid., December 5, 1935.

early stages was that there was a possibility that Italian finances and economic conditions were such that it would not take a great deal to stop the war effort. However, on September 5 the editors were doubtful that any action would be taken against Italy since the European nations were so ready to "doubt the good faith of British diplomacy".

The Gazette devoted little editorial space to Canada's position in the crisis. On September 9, however, the editors criticized the people who were raising the "Imperial issue" in Quebec.

The special attention which is being paid in this province to the possible sacrifice of lives in a foreign quarrel, the issues of which are obscure to Canadians, may be inspired by the fact that there is an active group in Quebec, well served with its own press, which ever raises the Imperial issue in order to attack it, whether it be a matter of participation in war or on a matter of immigration policy.²⁶

The editorial went on to claim that three political leaders (Bennett, King and Stevens) had all been catering to this group of people by reassuring them that Canada would not rush headlong into war but rather that Parliament would be called to decide this matter. A few days later a short editorial was devoted to criticizing J. S. Woodsworth's statements that wars were a result of capitalism. He was considered wrong in facts and wrong also in attempting "to make political profits out of events abroad".

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The Montreal Gazette, September 9, 1935.

When oil sanctions were mentioned Canada's part was not commented upon. On November 30 in an editorial entitled "Oil May Spread Conflagration" it was suggested that indications were that Britain would promote the extension of sanctions but no mention whatsoever was made of Dr. Riddell's efforts up to this point. The Lapointe statement was similarly met without comment. When Prime Minister King's explanatory note was released the Gazette indicated at least semi-approval. The editors agreed that there was a need for some type of explanation in order "to relieve a state of public mind disturbed by the emphasis with which the news dispatches from Geneva informed the world that Canada had proposed to include oil . . ."²⁷ The reaction to the other extreme was recognized as being rather unfortunate but this could be easily overcome by a reaffirmation of support for the League.

The Hoare-Laval plan was considered, by the Gazette, to be a valiant attempt to prevent war. In reply to the first outbursts of criticisms the editors claimed that critics had insufficient information at their disposal. Two days later they recognized that the plan was "doomed to almost immediate failure" but the principle of attempting conciliation was still considered good. It was not considered that the Hoare-Laval plan represented any weakening of League support by Britain.

²⁷

Ibid., December 9, 1935.

These editorials discussed in this chapter indicate a general dissatisfaction with the government handling of policy during the Ethiopian crisis. While there was some confusion caused by the announcement of the Hoare-Laval plan these newspapers did not question the sincerity of the British Government in its promises of League support. Even those newspapers which were convinced from the start that the League was a failure were unhappy about the La-pointe statement. They argued that Canada's action reflected badly upon Britain and made her position far more difficult. Whatever the reasons were for the objections by this group of newspapers there can be little doubt that the magnitude of the objections came as a surprise to the Canadian Government. This support when added to the type discussed in the preceeding chapter necessitated a number of explanations by the Government.

CHAPTER V

SOME INDICATIONS OF ISOLATIONIST OPINION IN CANADA
DURING THE CRISIS

There is no doubt that the greatest support for the idea of Canadian isolationism during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis came from Quebec but it certainly must be recognized that support for this attitude was not limited to Quebec. Indications of isolationism could have been found across the country and if the British connection had not existed it is likely that this would have been the predominant attitude. This is not however taken into consideration by critics of United States isolationism in this period.

Remarkably similar approaches to the crisis were taken by the various French Canadian newspapers considered. Le Devoir on November 7 called for a "saner foreign policy" to replace the one which under-emphasized the fact that Canada was a North American power with the United States as her most important neighbor. A foreign policy more in accord with that of the United States seemed to the editors to be a wiser policy for Canada. Again a week later concern was expressed over the general nature of Canadian foreign policy as it had "created an unfavorable impression in certain quarters". The editors considered it a good sign

that a number of government supporters were disturbed by the stand being taken and even the Prime Minister had indicated some uneasiness as he had continually reaffirmed that this action could not be taken as a precedent.

The Lapointe statement repudiating Riddell was welcomed by Le Devoir. The editors considered it "an unexpected occurrence" that a representative had made such statements without consulting his government and as a result there was no alternative to an announcement, such as the one made, for the government. Surprise was expressed when G. H. Ferguson took some initiative at Geneva and this surprise turned to downright amazement when Dr. Riddell began to promote the extension of sanctions. Many people, thought Le Devoir, understandably began to think Canada was being used by Britain. The confusion and misinterpretations made it essential that some statement be made and it was a most welcome one when it came.

For this and many other reasons, therefore, when Hon. Ernest Lapointe made a declaration setting forth Canada's stand and clarifying the whole puzzling atmosphere, we were more than glad personally and, we think, on behalf of the overwhelming majority of Canadians, to enthusiastically cry, Bravo, Mr. Lapointe.¹

La Tribune of Sherbrooke Quebec had a slightly different approach to the Riddell incident. It was granted that Dr. Riddell might have been entitled to express his

¹ Le Devoir, Quoted in the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, December 7, 1935.

own opinion but at the same time he should have been more careful in making it clear that this was not the opinion of the Canadian Government. The Lapointe statement was considered desirable and necessary.

Mr. Lapointe explains with reason that Canada would be very stupid, at the moment when she is trying to get order in her commercial transactions with the other countries of the world, to adopt, first and of her own volition rigorous measures against Italy, which was for a long time, and still is, one of her best customers.²

Their interpretation of the Lapointe statement was that it indicated friendliness towards Italy and was welcomed as such as well as because it was an indication of isolationist policy.

Le Canadien of Montreal similarly welcomed the Lapointe statement. They considered the Canadian position to have been misunderstood by other nations for two reasons. Firstly, these nations did not understand that Dr. Riddell in speaking in the Committee of Eighteen was speaking as an individual and not as a spokesman for the Canadian Government. Secondly, most of the European nations did not understand the significance of the Statute of Westminister and therefore believed that the Canadian representative spoke for the mother country. The Lapointe statement, the editors argued, corrected many of these misunderstandings and was a clear statement of Canada's stand on League matters. "This document sets forth with admirable ability

² La Tribune Sherbrooke, Quoted in the Montreal Star, December 5, 1935.

and without weakness or compromise, Canada's attitude towards the League of Nations in the matter of sanctions".³

L'Action Catholique first called for greater support for the League, but this did not last long. The editors first thought that it would be a mistake to condemn this indispensable institution absolutely and to refuse to give it all support, moral or material simply because of early failures. It appeared far wiser to make some constructive suggestions for improvement and thus be "propagators of the idea which it serves and should serve still better". A short time later, however, their willingness to give support to the imperfect League had considerably lessened. The editors now felt that there was no doubt about Canadian hostility to participation in European wars and it was therefore most perplexing "that Canada's representative in the League of Nations should persist in proposing measures which are of such a nature as to render war inevitable".⁴ The fact that Dr. Riddell had proposed the inclusion of oil in the sanctions list at a time when it was evident that such action would likely lead to war was considered evidence of British domination. "People are asking themselves, and with reason, if Mr. Riddell really represents Canada at Geneva or is he merely a pawn maneuvered by others in the present international chess game."

³ Le Canadien Montreal, Quoted in the Montreal Star, December 12, 1935.

⁴ L'Action Catholique, Quoted in the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, November 30, 1935.

As the crisis dragged on L'Action Catholique began to express greater sympathy for the Italian position. The editors were impressed by the considerable progress made since Mussolini took over control of a poor country which was at the time in a state of disorder. It was necessary for Italy to provide a place for her "superabundant generation of the future" and the decision to turn toward Ethiopia and Libya was taken quite some time ago and negotiations on the subject of Lake Tana made this evident to everyone. The attempt of other nations to force Italy to make an "about face" could lead to disastrous consequences for the Fascist Government of Italy. The editors feared that the fall of Mussolini could not occur "without exposing Italy to an overturn, probably to red revolution".⁵ Anything, of course, was considered justifiable to prevent such a revolution.

Le Droit of Ottawa also presented an isolationist point of view. It was argued that Canadian interests differed so greatly from those of Britain that it would be preposterous to be drawn into a war for British interests. It was only because Italy's ambitions would destroy British power in the Mediterranean that Britain was now showing keen interest. They further believed that Britain would have approved "military and naval sanctions" had it not been for the pressures from France. It seemed obvious that the desire for action was not based on any high ideal since no

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Ibid., Quoted in the Montreal Star, December 5, 1935.

real action was proposed against Japan for invading Manchuria nor against Germany for her violation of the Treaty of Versailles. "No, her interest was then to let things alone and she took good care not to stir up the League of Nations."⁶

Le Droit, of course, welcomed the Lapointe statement and considered Dr. Riddell to have been treated far more leniently than he deserved. "In a polite and softened form the Ottawa Government repudiates the attitude of Dr. Riddell at Geneva and disengages itself completely from the responsibility of such intervention."⁷ The editors took note of the considerable furor that was caused in some parts of Europe by this statement but this was viewed as further proof of the necessity for Canada to make it clear that she would not "follow blindly the diplomats at Geneva" even though the principle of economic sanctions had been accepted. While approving the Lapointe statement Le Droit did not desire to see the League of Nations completely destroyed. "Let us congratulate Mr. Lapointe and his colleagues on having, while reaffirming our desire to cooperate with Geneva, separated our cause from that of the diplomats whose efforts today seem directed to the provocation of an international conflict."⁸

⁶ Le Droit Ottawa, Quoted in the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, November 18, 1935.

⁷ Ibid., Quoted in the Montreal Star, December 5, 1935.

⁸ Ibid.

Le Soleil believed that the British connection was being exploited by the politicians and the professed belief in a League of Nations was simply a front. They were extremely critical of the Conservative Party in this respect since they believed the British connection was being used to try to rebuild the party after the defeat at the polls. The Lapointe statement was very favourably received by Le Soleil as a necessary correction to the unfavorable impression made by Dr. Riddell at Geneva.

The Dominion has not the power to condemn Italy even if it had the right to judge the case without a hearing. The Canadian government, in future, will study all sanctions propositions so as to make sure that the Dominion will not assume any more responsibilities than necessary, declared Honorable Mr. Lapointe, and we are sure, this stand is widely approved.⁹

The criticism of Canadian policy in this crisis made by La Renaissance was based on the effect it had on the economy. The Italian standard of living was low but she had nevertheless been a good customer for Canadian goods and if matters had been handled properly tremendous profits could have been made. The repudiation of Riddell and the Prime Minister's explanation of this were approved by the editors but they considered that this was too little, too late. Earlier they had voiced the opinion that Prime Minister King had promised not to become actively involved.

⁹ Le Soleil, Quoted in the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, December 3, 1935.

Even though Mr. King promised to save our soldiers for some other conflict (now that is thoughtful), so we need not worry on that score, the fact still remains that we cannot afford to lose 6-1/2 million dollars worth of trade relations with Italy, which could swell to 20 millions; just for the sake of a gesture.¹⁰

The whole idea of a League was considered unacceptable and failure after failure should have made it evident that the wisest policy would be to withdraw. "The moral failure of the League of Nations unfortunately began the day of its institution and personally we think that Canada should withdraw from this useless human enterprise."

L'Evenement took the position that the greatest danger in the existing crisis for Canada was that once more she would be drawn into war as a result of British interests in the area of the Nile. The editors were discouraged about the lack of interest in foreign affairs displayed by Canadians. In their estimation the Italo-Ethiopian crisis should have been of greater interest to Canadians than the elections. They welcomed Prime Minister King's assurance that Parliament would be consulted prior to involving the country in any military action. Their theme was "avoid war at all costs" and consequently they were pleased by the Lapointe statement.

Speaking at the Couchiching conference of 1936 Paul Martin expressed another French-Canadian viewpoint. He

¹⁰ La Renaissance, Quoted in the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, November 20, 1935.

was convinced that Canadians, whether of English or French background, were not isolationist. Nor were they prepared to follow completely the leadership of other nations in the field of foreign affairs. He argued that it was necessary to develop a "healthy Canadian nationalism" first and then perhaps more attention could be devoted to international affairs. The League he viewed as a good instrument deserving Canadian support. Since some of the European nations were not willing to put their faith in the League there seemed little reason for Canada to be taking any great degree of the initiative.

As long as there was a semblance of faith and sincerity, we did not argue as to the absoluteness of our obligations in respect of economic sanctions as provided by Article 16 of the Covenant. Everything being equal, I agree we should, in the absence of others initiating oil sanctions against Italy, take steps of initiation, but events have shown that everything was not equal, and the course taken by our Government, I now believe, to have been sound.¹¹

He then went on to suggest that the future of the League was dark unless the Covenant was overhauled in such a way as to strengthen the power of the League to enforce its decisions.

Professor Bruchesi attempted an explanation of the views of the French Canadians who, he said, were looked upon by the rest of Canada as "a priest-ridden ignoramus speaking a sort of jargon" when it came to foreign affairs. He recognized that in a variety of fields League action had been

¹¹ Paul Martin, "Canada and the Collective System", Canada: The Empire and the League, (Toronto: Nelson and Sons, 1936), p. 112.

highly commendable but its primary purpose was to stop war and in this area the record was simply a list of failures. An unfortunate feature of the League was that it fell far short of being universal and yet it included in its membership the Communist Government of Russia. The latter was of considerable concern to French-Canadians.

Even informed French-Canadians are far from relying on the power of the Geneva League to settle disputes, which League, rightly or wrongly, they suspect to follow, from its beginning the orders of a free masonry now coupled with Communism in the field of international affairs on the European continent at least.¹²

Such beliefs of course made it impossible for the people of Quebec to support the League and perhaps become involved in a war. The outcome and purposes of such a war appeared to him to be ". . . to rescue a certain tribe of negroes from the clutches of an imperialist power, . . . , and to allow the arms manufacturers of France, England and Germany profitable speculations".

Professor Bruchesi did not suggest that Canada had no obligations to try to maintain the peace but any efforts spent in maintaining the peace had to be "according to her vital interests, her present situation and her capacity". He suggested that Canadians should accept the need for a change in the League but should also realize that the necessary change was not one in the institution itself but

¹² Jean Bruchesi, "A French-Canadian View of Canada's Foreign Policy", Canada: The Empire and the League, (Toronto: Nelson and Sons, 1936), p. 130.

rather in the state of mind of the people of the world.

People were in need of learning the teaching of Christ to love thy neighbor. However, while this change was in process Canada had two duties to perform. The first duty was to "keep peace within the borders of our country" and the second "to avoid becoming under any circumstances accomplices of any kind of imperialism".

The Catholic Register placed an emphasis upon careful consideration of the Italian side of the case though it never went so far as to recommend the support of Italy's cause. Population pressures were emphasized as was the fact of the similarity between what Italy was attempting and what the other European nations had accomplished earlier. Just because Italy's ambitions were going to interfere with the imperialism of other nations and because of the form of government in Italy was disagreeable to some a war to destroy Italy was not justified. When the League supporters began to blame Quebec for the repudiation of Riddell the Register objected. They argued that support for this action would have been far more widespread and the Italian case would have been far more popular if it had not been for the propaganda of "the paid agents of Moscow in our midst". They later complained that the League against War and Fascism was "a subsidiary organization of the Commintern in Canada and other countries".¹³ This favorable view of

¹³ The Catholic Register, XLV, (31), August 5, 1937.

Fascism on the part of the Register became even more evident in the comments on the Spanish Civil War.¹⁴

While it is probably unfair to consider Mr. Escott Reid an isolationist, his writings certainly contributed to its cause. In the January 1936 issue of the Canadian Forum he suggested that if Canadians desired to stay out of war the government had better be very cautious in her handling of sanctions because even though they might work in the case of Italy it would not be long until they would have to be applied to Germany. He did not consider that Canada had any binding commitments to apply sanctions since the Covenant was accepted on the basis of the belief that membership would be relatively universal and that there would be sufficient machinery for the revision of settlements. "An effective collective system means not only the restraint of the aggressor but also disarmament, international instead of imperial control of colonies and effective machinery to deal with treaty revision and the problems of markets, migration and raw materials".¹⁵ He opposed the implementation of sanctions on the grounds that Canada should strive towards making the League worthy of support first.

The following month Mr. Reid criticized the October 29 statement of Prime Minister Mackenzie King. He referred

¹⁴ See Margaret Prang, "Some Opinions of Political Radicalism in Canada Between the Two World Wars (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Toronto, 1953).

¹⁵ Escott Reid, "Canada and the Abyssinian Crisis", Canadian Forum, January, 1936.

to a resolution introduced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons June 21, 1926, which called for approval by Parliament for any policy of introducing sanctions. Yet the statement of October 29, 1935, signified the acceptance of League proposals involving sanctions without any prior approval of Parliament. By means of the argument summarized in the preceding paragraph Mr. Reid concluded that there was no automatic obligation for Canada to impose sanctions and therefore the Prime Minister was flouting Parliament by ignoring his own resolution of 1926. His solution was withdrawal of support for the League in this crisis.

Professor F. H. Underhill was another of the English writers who contributed to the cause of isolationism. In February of 1936 in the Canadian Forum he proposed a closer examination of American opinion and policy by the Canadian press. He did not feel that Canadian public opinion was a great deal different.

Is Canadian opinion at bottom very much different? The attempt of certain sections of our press to work up excitement over Mr. Lapointe's supposed desertion of the League on the question of the oil embargo has turned out to be pretty much of a dud. . . . Mr. Dafoe in his notable article in the current number of foreign affairs seems to me to overestimate the quality of League enthusiasm in Canada when he discovers that the recent crisis has crystallized Canadian opinion so that we are now willing to go all out for sanctions. I suspect that his reading of Canadian opinion is done by looking at himself in the mirror.¹⁶

¹⁶ Canadian Forum, February, 1936.

He later described the criticism which followed the disavowal of Mr. Riddell as showing "Canadian hypocrisy at its worst". He felt that Canada should strive to set her own house in order rather than be meddling in the affairs of other nations.

Newspaper opinion, then, indicated a strong belief in isolationism on the part of Quebec. This was somewhat reinforced by the fact that, to many, Italy was only the home of the Papacy, to others fascism was, if not desirable, at least not undesirable and to still others any internationalism represented a leaning toward Communism. The Lapointe statement was therefore very much welcomed by these people. The English press did not give much support to isolationism though some writings such as those of Escott Reid and F. H. Underhill did give the cause a boost. As far as League enthusiasts were concerned pacifism also represented a form of isolationism and when J. W. Dafoe spoke of the country being seventy-five per cent isolationist there is no doubt that he included in this percentage figure the pacifists. However there is little doubt that the failure of Canadian leaders to clarify the issues was to some extent responsible for the magnitude of isolationist opinion.

CHAPTER VI

SOME EXPRESSIONS OF PACIFIST SENTIMENT AND
SOME INDICATIONS OF CONFUSION IN EDITORIAL OPINION

In addition to League support, support of the British stand and isolationism there appeared to be considerable support for pacifism. This chapter will consider some of the expressions of pacifist sentiment and also the stand taken by two newspapers with considerable circulation, The Montreal Star and The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph. Both of these newspapers developed editorial opinion which appears confused when the comments on the various stages of the crisis are consolidated.

The outstanding exponent of pacifist opinion in Canada during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis was J. S. Woods-worth, the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North. His criticisms were very forceful and indicate extreme concern about the lack of interest in foreign affairs displayed by Canadians generally and by the Canadian House of Commons in particular. "It is curious that although we participated in one great war and are in danger of being thrown into another, we take no very active part in actually discussing external affairs."¹ He went on to quote Mr. George Lansbury

¹ Canada, House of Commons Debates, March 2, 1936, p. 675.

in his resignation from the leadership of the Labour Party in the following manner:

It is impossible for me to believe that anything good can come out of mass murder, whether this is carried out by order of a League of Nations or by a single nation. Evil cannot be swept out of our lives by evil; the spirit of war cannot be destroyed by more war.²

This statement he said he would like to adopt as his own so that there would be no doubt in the mind of any Member as to where he stood. While he recognized that the League could be beneficial in a variety of fields he objected to encouraging it to go to war. "So we ought to recognize that the League of Nations in so far as it is an association of nations seeking to promote peace, ought to be supported."³ Removal of economic difficulties and social inequalities of people throughout the world seemed to him to be projects to which the League could devote its attention without becoming embroiled in a war.

The Canadian Forum, taking an isolationist position, argued strongly against placing Canada in a position in which she would become embroiled in a war as a result of her membership in the League of Nations. This journal was quite critical of the League of Nations and some of its earlier actions. In the October issue it was pointed out that Italy had a real need for raw materials and that the League's efforts should be devoted to solving this problem

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

rather than simply trying to prevent Italy from solving it for herself. At the same time they reminded League supporters that Italy had attempted to find a peaceable solution to her problems through the League but this attempt was blocked by the Canadian Representative at that time, N. W. Rowell. The underlying causes of war were economic according to The Forum and, unless the League was willing to deal with these, there was no hope for its survival. There seemed to be no hope that the Canadian Government would favor League action on these economic problems since the Liberals had consistently refused to do anything about the underlying economic causes of internal problems.

In the same issue of the Canadian Forum the opinion was expressed that the election campaign was revealing an "emphatic public opinion against our becoming entangled in a European war". This was so obvious, according to the editors, that all the political leaders have been playing up to it. They did not deny the existence of other views but attributed them mostly to the efforts of the members of the League of Nations Society who desired to "drag Canada into war at the heels of the British Government". Any appeal to the idealism of the League could not possibly carry much weight since Britain and France used the League only for their own ends. When sanctions were suggested in the Sino-Japanese dispute the British were in opposition because they desired the friendship of Japan in the Far East but in the case of Italy they pushed sanctions because Italian

ambitions in the Red Sea area threatened to complicate matters for them in Africa as well as perhaps cut the transportation route to India. France on the other hand showed interest in supporting the League only when the action proposed would have the effect of keeping Germany in her place. Canadians, they said, should support the League only when it became effective in obtaining aid for the "have not" nations from the "have" nations. It would take time for Geneva to build "the machinery for international economic planning" but there was no inclination amongst Canadians to give support to the League until this was accomplished. The Forum also recognized that the trade union movement was anti-Italian but claimed this was due to an "hysteria about fascism and nazism" which blinded them to the fact that shooting German and Italian workers would never prove a solution to the problem.

In the December issue of The Forum there was an attempt to determine what Canadian foreign policy was and what it would be in the future. This task was complicated by changes in approach by various officials and politicians. Generally, Bennett and the Conservatives could have been expected to base their election campaign on loyalty to the mother country but this did not happen. The whole problem of foreign affairs was largely ignored by the Conservatives and when it was mentioned it was the Covenant that was discussed. The Liberals, according to The Forum, also laid

the emphasis upon the League responsibilities.⁴ The net effect of this policy was to support British Imperialism because in speaking of obligations the only ones mentioned were sanctions, and no attempt to eliminate the fundamental economic causes of war was suggested. If the League was to act effectively in this instance the precedent would be set for League action whenever the status quo was threatened. This was precisely what the British Government desired the editors said.

Editorial discussion of the Riddell incident passed it off as being rather unimportant. The reaction in Canada was described as only "a little flurry" over a statement whose significance was "highly exaggerated". After all the Canadian Government did not say that they were not going to support sanctions. It did however cause the Conservatives to show their true feelings as they clamored so loudly over the betrayal of the League and the Empire. Only when the Empire was affected did the Conservatives say anything about the League. The Conservatives in this case however had spoken too soon as the announcement of the Hoare-Laval plan had placed them in a very difficult position which as a matter of fact forced their silence. The decision of King and Lapointe in this matter was considered by The Forum as being wise and in accord with the policies of all Canadian Governments since the war. They were simply making it clear

⁴ The evidence used by The Forum in support of this is drawn from speeches of Rowell and Dafoe.

that Canada would not become involved militarily in Europe. If Mussolini retaliated to oil sanctions by the use of force and Canada had initiated them there would have been no alternative for her but to "see the war through".

The following month the suggestion was made that American policy should be more carefully analyzed and given greater attention and coverage by the press. The similarity of this to the policy desired by Canadians was shown by the failure of the attempt by some people to "work up excitement over Mr. Lapointe's supposed desertion of the League on the question of the oil embargo". The Dafoe evaluation of Canadian public opinion was viewed as entirely wrong and probably arrived at by Dafoe "looking at himself in the mirror".

When sanctions had failed (in the manner in which they were applied) and it had become evident that they would be withdrawn The Forum warned that this should not be taken as reason for removing them from the Covenant. A great deal was learned in this experiment and a great deal more could have been done. Economic sanctions could be effective if they were properly and quickly applied. The parliamentary speech of the Prime Minister King on June 18, 1936, which announced the end of sanctions was praised as a very clear exposition of Canadian foreign policy. It was not to be interpreted as an indication of isolationist policy but rather non-interventionist policy. The alternative was to follow the recommendations of the Free Press which in the final analysis was nothing other than lining up behind

the British Government. The Forum also charged that this was a ridiculous position for Mr. Dafoe to hold while he was constantly defending and promoting the development of Canadian autonomy.

The opinions expressed by the Montreal Star are impossible to categorize as they indicate a vacillation between isolationism and imperialism. The Canadian influence was judged by that newspaper to be rather insignificant and consequently most of the editorials were devoted to an analysis of the British position during the crisis.

Early in July an editorial was devoted to the discussion of the "incredible" and "preposterous" idea that some members of the British Cabinet were prepared to risk war with Italy just to save the League. A few days later the editors warned against allowing idealism to overshadow one's better judgment. The "realism" which they offered as an alternative policy was of a "do nothing" nature.

The world's great democracies, the custodians of freedom, are very wise not to endanger their safety or their prestige by undertaking tasks far afield which they lack the strength and cohesion to perform.⁵

The attempts at conciliation made by the British and French governments were very much welcomed by the editors. By July 5 they had concluded that British policy was not directed toward stopping Mussolini from getting territory but rather toward "the humane purpose of securing for him

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The Montreal Star, July 29, 1935.

spoils enough to satisfy his ambitions without the butchering of thousands of young men on both sides in an unnecessary war". The editors were very hopeful of successful negotiations since Great Britain and France were both able to exert considerable pressure on the Ethiopian Government. The Star did not raise the question of "right or wrong" but rather considered the end of avoiding war to justify the use of any means - even the sacrificing of a nation. There appeared to be only one real solution to the problem and that was for Britain, France and Italy to divide the spoils in such a way that Mussolini's pride could be saved and still not acquiesce completely to his demands. The editors considered it likely that British diplomacy was being directed toward getting the Ethiopian Government to accept gracefully the inevitable dismemberment of its Empire.

From the beginning of the crisis The Star placed no faith whatsoever in the League. The suggestion that an arms sanction should be introduced was described as "the farcical sort of thing that wooly minded idealists would urge". The League simply did not have the power to prevent war and would have to be completely revamped before it had this power. Since the time element was extremely important the world would have to rely on Britain and France. The editors also feared that if the League acted successfully Italy would be driven into an alliance with Germany. They felt also that it would be dangerous to have the small nations making the decision of whether or not to

intervene since they would not be called upon to contribute to any armed force.

In the early stages of the crisis only one editorial was devoted to a discussion of Canada's position in the whole crisis. On August 16 the editors considered that there was no real danger of war and even if hostilities did break out between Italy and Britain they would be short lived as Britain could paralyze the Italian war effort by closing the Suez Canal. Canada's obligations seemed to be best described by Laurier's comment: "When Britain is at war Canada is at war". However, the nature of a war at this time would be such that Canada would not be asked to contribute.

As far as Canada is concerned there is surely nothing to discuss. No one thinks that a World War is imminent. An Italo-British war would not call for a single company of Canada's militia. Like every part of the British Empire, we would be technically "at war", but we would probably never know it.⁶

The editors dismissed the idea that if the League failed in this case it would disappear. The history of the League proved that it could survive any number of failures even when there were as many great nations outside the League as inside. The Star found it most disturbing that the Canadian taxpayer should be called upon periodically to provide money to keep such an organization operating.

But if you imagine a little thing like that [failure] will induce the League

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Ibid., August 21, 1935.

to turn its fine palaces on Lake Geneva into a tourists hotel or forego the joy of frequent full dress parade of all the statesmen of Europe, you are crazy. The League will still be spending your money when the guns of the second act of Armageddon have broken in on another cocktail party at which swallow tailed delegates will be patching up a formula to guarantee to muzzle Mussolini or hamstring Hitler.

When the Lapointe statement was made The Star observed that it was an attempt by the Government to cater to public opinion which opposed war.

The idea of war is not popular in the country and the Administration is at pains to show that in its adherence to the League proposals non-provocative sanctions only are contemplated with no likelihood of military measures, at least without the consent of Parliament.⁷

The editors considered that this statement had been very necessary because everywhere the oil proposal was being referred to as the Canadian proposal. They scoffed at the idea that Dr. Riddell would make such a suggestion as a member of the Committee of Eighteen only and not as a representative of Canada.

They were not interested in Dr. Riddell's personal opinion. They wanted to know what Canada thought and they had every right to infer that Canada's representative in Geneva would not speak on so vital a subject without having previously consulted his government.⁸

The whole incident showed that Canada had not taken seriously enough her obligations in the League and had not been

⁷ Ibid., December 2, 1935.

⁸ Ibid.

careful in selecting her delegates. When such a crisis was under discussion a more authoritative representative should have been sent.

No subordinate should be allowed to speak for us on an issue that could conceivably lead to war. It ought to be a Minister of the Crown in constant consultation with his colleagues. This "oil blunder" might easily have put Canada in a position where she must have entered a war in Europe over Ethiopia.⁹

When the Hoare-Laval plan was made public The Star viewed it as a compromise peace and considered it a worthy proposal though they realized it was a method, of maintaining peace, which would probably not be acceptable to many.

Taking in the whole picture, the sincere and single-minded friends of peace - who are not wedded to any particular method of achieving it - may well "thank God and take courage".¹⁰

On December 17 The Star expressed pleasure that another crisis had been passed and though the Hoare-Laval proposals had had few friends it had served its purpose and could now be thrown into discard.

The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph was quick in condemning Italy for her threats against Ethiopia and continued to do so throughout the crisis. Some hope was expressed that the League would be able to bring Italy into line but this depended, in their view almost entirely upon what British

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., December 11, 1935.

action would be in the League. The editors periodically talked about the necessity of avoiding war at all costs. The possibility was raised that Ethiopia might become a League Protectorate and the only justification required for such action was that it would "keep the peace". When oil sanctions were discussed the Chronicle-Telegraph recognized that this greatly increased the danger of war. A number of references were made to the fact that the oil proposal was initiated by Dr. Riddell but no criticism appeared until after the Lapointe statement. If their desire was to avoid war at any costs it seems strange that this move did not come under fire earlier.

The repudiation of Riddell was recognized as being very advantageous for Italy's propaganda campaign. It could be used to indicate a "rift in Empire unity and the beginning of differences among League members" and this was exactly what Fascist propaganda had been trying to bring about. Nevertheless the editors believed "in a world sense the stand of Canada is not vitally important one way or another". The repudiation was considered to have been the correct move for the Canadian Government since Canada was not ready to go to war with Italy and would not be directly concerned in an oil embargo. This did not alter the stand taken earlier by the Canadian Government.

The Acting Minister of External Affairs has not repudiated the stand previously taken by Prime Minister King in accepting Canadian responsibility for the decision of the League to improve economic sanctions. He has merely defined the position of the

Canadian Government with respect to the initiative assumed by its representative without instructions.¹¹

The editors also considered that the Canadian people generally approved of the "clarification" of the Canadian stand and while Canada had certain duties to perform since she was a League member it was best to allow the larger nations to take the lead.

The Canadian people certainly do not wish to be drawn into any foreign war and Mr. Lapointe is to be commended for having cleared this country of a responsibility there was no need for it to take and which might tend to expose it dangerously. As a League member, Canada doubtless has to co-operate in the application of economic sanctions. But it is for more interested and more powerful nations to take the lead and bear the brunt of specific proposals.¹²

Support for the Lapointe statement came then from pacifists and also some people, who while not pacifists, were most anxious to avoid hostilities in this case. Both The Montreal Star and the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph fit into this latter category. Neither newspaper did a very effective job of justifying its position. The Canadian Forum on the other hand pointed to an alternative policy (removing economic causes of war) as a solution not only to the Italo-Ethiopian problem but also as a method of settling similar difficulties that might arise in the future.

¹¹ The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, December 4, 1935.

¹² Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Canadian Government action in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis met with a varied reaction on the part of various groups within the country. There can be no doubt that regardless of the nature of the policy settled upon by the Canadian Government it would have alienated a considerable segment of the electorate. It is the opinion of the author that the patterns established in Canadian foreign policy were on the way to being broken during September, October and November of 1935 and this caused enough of an uproar to promote a return to a "do nothing" policy on the part of the administration. The uproar caused by the Lapointe statement was largely unexpected and on several occasions later Prime Minister King found himself attempting to explain this action. While the support for the foreign policy of King-Lapointe came from across the country (letters to the editor in various newspapers reveal this) the only strong support came from the province of Quebec. Newspapers in this province had for some time shown friendliness toward the Italian cause and had been critical of any Canadian support for the League attempt at curbing Italy. It is reasonable to conclude then that if the

repudiation of Dr. Riddell was based on political motives it was an attempt of the Liberals to cater to Quebec--probably on the assumption that the objections from the rest of Canada would not be too vociferous.

There is of course a possibility that there was no political motive involved in the decision to issue a statement. However, had this been the case, it seems more likely that the clarification would have been made by Dr. Riddell himself. One biographer of Prime Minister King was convinced that the decision was politically motivated. His statement reads as follows: "King was thinking only of votes. The Ethiopian crisis could not have touched Canada at a worse moment."¹ A similar opinion was held by both N. W. Rowell and J. W. Dafoe as can be seen by their reaction to the Lapointe statement and their protest to the Government which have been described earlier.² It is questionable that the policy followed was the most desirable from the point of view of ensuring votes but this writer believes that it became a politically wise move with the announcement of the Hoare-Laval peace plan.

Another possible explanation for the action is that it was the influence of the permanent civil service and especially the influence of Dr. O. D. Skelton. Communications between N. W. Rowell and O. D. Skelton, which were

¹Bruce Hutchison, The Incredible Canadian, (Toronto: Longmans Green and Co., 1952), p. 203.

²See Chapter III.

discussed earlier, give some weight to this theory but if Dr. Skelton's influence was so great and he was convinced that Canada's role was not to lead, it seems strange that there was such a delay in making public a repudiation. It is Dr. Riddell's belief that the suggestion for the announcement did not originate with O. D. Skelton. However, there is little doubt that Dr. Skelton was in agreement with the decision and recognized the necessity of such a statement to satisfy public opinion in Quebec.³

Since the decision was basically political the question arises as to whether or not an alternative policy would not have been more in accord with the desires of the Canadian people. One of the problems faced in reaching a decision on this matter is that foreign affairs did not seem extremely important to Canadians in the midst of the depression. Added to this fact was an apparent attempt in Parliament to limit discussion of matters in this field. Both J. S. Woodsworth and J. W. Dafoe complained of the lack of interest in this matter. One writer suggested that this was a very carefully directed policy.

Because they do not know which way Canadian public opinion may jump, our politicians, with characteristic unheroic caution, are doing their best to avoid any public discussion of the subject.⁴

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Interview with Dr. Riddell, June 24, 1956.

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F. H. Underhill, "Parliament and Foreign Policy", Canadian Forum, June 1936.

A similar belief was expressed by F. H. Soward though he believed that the crisis had aroused some people to take an interest in such matters.

Meanwhile the intensification of the crisis in international affairs has aroused Canadians from their splendid indifference to an uncomfortable awareness that the policy of drift may have its dangers. So far it has been left to a few, mainly in academic circles and journalism to voice their opinion in an effort to arouse, if not to create, Canadian opinion.⁵

He went on to suggest that the indifference was due, at least in part, to the behavior of Canadian political leaders who had maintained "a conspiracy of silence".

In so far as opinions were expressed on the subject of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, this writer believes that they indicate a far stronger support for a policy of backing the League than for the policy followed. Newspaper editorials show that most of the English newspapers were either firm supporters of the League or firm supporters of strengthening and maintaining the British Commonwealth. Some of those falling in the latter category had no faith whatsoever in the League as an instrument for maintaining peace but nevertheless, they were opposed to the action taken by the Canadian Government in repudiating Dr. Riddell because they saw it as weakening of the British Commonwealth. Until the announcement of the Hoare-Laval plan these people were anxious to promote sanctions believing this to be in accord with British policy.

⁵ F. H. Soward, "Canada and Foreign Affairs", Canadian Historical Review, June 1936.

What then caused the administration to make a political decision which alienated large sectors of the population? This resulted at least partly from the underestimation of the power and extent of League support and partly from a rather well organized pressure placed on Lapointe. Henri Bourassa was aware that great pressures were put on Lapointe by various groups in Quebec and that this was intensified by the actions of the Italian Consul in Montreal.⁶ It is quite true that pressures came from elsewhere for an essentially isolationist policy but these would not have been politically very significant.

The general pattern of Canadian policy in the field of external relations prior to this had been to avoid whenever possible becoming committed to any definite action and whenever possible to extend Canadian autonomy. This is perhaps understandable when one considers that any decision would result in criticism from some politically significant group. However, it was most unfortunate that Canada chose such a crucial time to make her announcement concerning the oil proposal. It is impossible to determine what the fate of the oil sanctions proposal would have been if this decision had not been made; nor is it possible to determine what the results would have been if the proposal had been accepted; but whatever would have happened, Canada must confess to weakening the League of Nations at a very

⁶In an interview with Dr. Riddell, June 24, 1956, this writer was told that Henri Bourassa had told Dr. Riddell of this in Geneva.

crucial moment in its history. There is no doubt that the situation would have been more difficult for Laval and whoever else desired to delay oil sanctions if the Lapointe statement had not been made. Nor is there any doubt that Canada could have had greater influence on British policy if she had had a definite policy of her own. The continued failure of Canadian Governments to provide leadership, in the creation of opinions in the field of foreign policy, in an attempt to avoid splitting the country actually had the opposite effect. Had the King-Lapointe administration joined forces with Dafoe, Rowell, Coyne and others it is likely that League support would have been great enough to offset the somewhat artificial Quebec influence. The failure of leadership not only had very unfortunate consequences in world affairs and League of Nations activities but also failed to produce the desired effect in Canada.

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