

Wilson Blinded by League Obsession, Says Lansing

Former Secretary's Book on Peace Parleys Shows Constant Clash With President Whose Mind "Seemed Inflexible"

Robert Lansing, former secretary of state, in his long-awaited book, "The Peace Negotiations," which is published today by the Houghton Mifflin Co., attempts to justify his own stand during and previous to the Paris conference and his opposition to President Wilson's policies. There is made obvious a constant clash of two totally irreconcilable personalities. From the very start it was evident that they could not work together in harmony. One gets the impression that President Wilson knew this and that probably Mr. Lansing also knew it.

The narrative is very frank, very straightforward and practically impersonal. It shows on practically every important question which confronted the American peace commissioners, Mr. Lansing's views were diametrically opposed to those of Mr. Wilson. Long before the peace commission was organized Mr. Lansing shows he felt that he himself, in his official capacity, would be the head of it when it was named. He had no thought that the President would so far depart from traditional custom as to go abroad to negotiate in person.

Wanted Wilson to Stay Home

When he learned that the President was bent on going, he tried to dissuade him. He argued that Mr. Wilson's prestige and power would be much greater if wielded from a distance and through men representing him and his views. He knew his attitude was resented by Mr. Wilson, yet he persisted. And his opposition persisted throughout the book.

Mr. Lansing points out that his views on virtually every subject that caused such discord were the views which have since been taken by the American people as a whole. He clashed with the President over Article X of the league covenant, holding that it was unconstitutional and would never be approved by Congress or the people. He clashed with the President over the system of mandatories, on the lack of a definite program for the American Commission and on the treaty with France.

Entire Lack of Confidence

From the very beginning Mr. Lansing was hopelessly out of the President's confidence. They saw each other infrequently, and never alone or in intimate, confidential discussion. Mr. Lansing's information about the progress of the peace negotiations came through others, most frequently from Colonel House, and never directly from the President.

In a chapter on "Secret Diplomacy," Mr. Lansing writes:

"... on the evening of January 29 I told him (the President) bluntly—perhaps too bluntly from the point of view of policy—that I considered the secret interviews which he was holding with European statesmen, where no

witnesses were present, were unwise. The silence with which the President received my remarks appeared to me significant of his attitude toward this advice. . . . In the circumstances, I think it was a blunder on my part to have stated my views in this way."

This sort of thing is repeated through all the chapters of the book.

Mr. Lansing summarizes his impressions of Mr. Wilson in these words:

"He seemed to think that, saving marked out a definite plan of action, any deviation from it would show a lack of purpose. Even when there could be no doubt that, in view of changed conditions, it was wise to change a policy which he had merely adopted or approved, he clung to it with peculiar tenacity, refusing or merely failing to modify it."

Wilson's Mind Inflexible

"Mr. Wilson's mind, once made up, seemed to become inflexible. It appeared to me unresponsive to arguments and even to facts. It lacked the elasticity and receptivity which have always been characteristic of sound judgment and right thinking. He might break, but he would not bend."

"This rigidity of mind accounts in large measure for the deplorable and, as it seems to me, needless conflict between the President and the Senate over the Treaty of Versailles. It accounts for other incidents in his career which have materially weakened his influence and cast doubts upon his wisdom."

And again, in a memorandum which Mr. Lansing wrote on March 30, during the conference:

"The President's obsession as to a League of Nations blinds him to everything else. An immediate peace is not to him compared to the adoption of the covenant. The whole world wants peace. The President wants his league. I think that the world will have to wait."

Differ on Article X

Mr. Wilson, according to Mr. Lansing, at first intended to rush through a sort of preliminary international agreement which would embody the League of Nations and which would be in such form that the consent of the United States Congress would not be necessary. He wanted to come back to this country with the league already successfully functioning.

Mr. Lansing told him that such a method was impossible, that no form of agreement could be binding upon this country without the consent of Congress. Other lawyers upheld this view and the President was reluctantly compelled to abandon the plan.

But he was determined that the league covenant should be written into whatever treaty was negotiated and here again the Lansing view differed radically from his.

Mr. Lansing wanted a quick peace. He considered preliminary treaties that would restore trade and commerce and that would contain a resolution providing for a further convention to draw up the convention for the proposed league. He himself arranged such a resolution. In fact, he even prepared a tentative draft of a league covenant

according to his own ideas. These things he forced upon the President. And the President did not like it.

Mr. Lansing felt that Article X blinds us to be at war with another country the moment that country does certain things, whereas the constitution provides that only Congress can declare a state of war. He wanted no such affirmative guarantee. His tentative draft contained what he termed a "self-denying" guarantee which would not bind the United States to take up arms at a moment's notice nor invalidate the Monroe Doctrine or the traditional Washington policy against "entangling alliances."

Commissioners Wanted to Resign

On the Shantung question the feeling between Mr. Lansing and the President became bitter. Bliss, White and Lansing held a meeting at which they discussed the bargain with Japan, and Bliss was asked by the other two to write the President protesting against the betrayal of China. The letter accomplished nothing. Mr. Lansing writes:

"So intense was the bitterness among the American commissioners over the flagrant wrong being perpetrated that when the decision of the council of four was known some of them considered whether or not they ought to resign or give notice that they would not sign the treaty if the articles concerning Shantung appeared. The presence at Versailles of the German plenipotentiaries, the uncertainty of the return of the Italian delegates to Rome and the murmurs of dissatisfaction among the delegates of the lesser nations made the international situation precarious."

"To have added to the serious conditions and to have possibly precipitated a crisis by openly rebelling against the President was to assume a responsibility which no commissioner was willing to take. With the greatest reluctance the American commissioners submitted

to the decision of the council of four. . . ."

According to Mr. Lansing, the covenant of the League of Nations, as it now stands, is not a document to preserve the peace of the world for the future; it is merely a pact to enable the victors of the world war to assure themselves of the fruits of their victory. He goes to some lengths to show that the President's world-democracy theory was merely an empty phrase.

Lansing says he wanted the peace treaty to assure all nations an equal voice in world affairs; he wanted a genuine international democracy. But Mr. Lansing thinks the treaty as it stands destroys all semblance of such an idealistic system. He says the five great powers—the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan—stand astride the world and ply the whip and spur. In a memorandum which Mr. Lansing wrote on May 8, 1919, he said:

"This war was fought by the United States to destroy forever the conditions which produced it. Those conditions have not been destroyed. They have been supplanted by other conditions equally productive of hatred, jealousy and suspicion. In place of the Triple Alliance and the Entente has arisen the Quintuple Alliance which is to rule the world. The victors in this war intend to impose their combined will upon the vanquished and to subordinate all interests to their own."

In such a strain, the writer deals with all the complex questions which became a part of the insurmountable barrier that arose between him and President Wilson. There is much "inside" information that is of absorbing interest. The style is frank and open beyond question and Lansing, while trying to justify his own stand, does not hesitate to blame himself for some of the mistakes he made in dealing with such a personality as the President's.

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DEBS BACK IN CELL IN ATLANTA PRISON

Socialist Leader Met at Station by Warden Zerbst and Attorney

Atlanta, Ga., March 25.—Eugene Debs, Socialist leader, reached here about noon today on his way back to his cell in the federal penitentiary after

his visit to Attorney General Daugherty at Washington. He would not discuss his trip to Washington, and accompanied by Warden Zerbst and his attorney left immediately for the penitentiary.

Washington, March 25.—(By A. P.)—Surprise, more than mild, lingered in the wake today of the unheralded visit to Washington, unattended, of Eugene V. Debs, imprisoned Socialist leader, to discuss his case with Attorney General Daugherty.

Shipping into Washington early yesterday, Debs had gone to the Department of Justice, held a three-hour conference with the attorney general and left to return to the Atlanta Pen-

itentiary. Then his visit was announced by Mr. Daugherty to a group of dumfounded newspaper men, whom the Socialist leader had successfully evaded throughout the day.

In announcing the visit of Debs, whose case he recently was directed to review by President Harding, the attorney general said he had called the Socialist leader to Washington after conferring with the President.

Inasmuch as Debs had defended himself at his trial, Mr. Daugherty said, it was decided that he should come here to answer such inquiries as the government desired to make.

The attorney general refused to comment on Debs' presentment of his case

or to indicate what recommendations he might make in the matter of Debs' ten-year sentence for violation of the espionage act.

Knit Textile Association to Dine Members of the National Association of the Sweater and Knitted Textile Industry will be given a dinner this evening at the Adelphia Hotel. The association's semiannual national meeting opened yesterday at the Adelphia and will close Sunday in Atlantic City with a Boardwalk fashion revue, a bathing contest and style show.

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