Hello and welcome history friends patrons all to episode 38 of the VAP. We have loads to get through today, and you’ve heard 37 of these introductions already, so without any further ado I will now bring to the aftermath of Wilson’s success in Paris. The US President had just achieved his mission, but he knew that the greatest fight, the treaty fight was still to come. Let’s find out how he got on…

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With the covenant of the LON approved of in Paris, WW had something to present to his political supporters and opponents back home. It was this campaign to acquire American approval of the League and the TOV which housed the terms of the League, which would rob Wilson of what remained of his health and patience. The political campaign, referred to as the treaty fight by historians, lasted effectively from the moment Wilson made landfall on 20th February 1919, to the moment when Wilson suffered his final, most incapacitating stroke on 2nd October 1919. It was a tough, brutal political battle, like the sequel to the PPC which Wilson had never wanted, and far less generous as far as tactics or perceptions of the President were concerned. To his utter despair, Wilson found that even after so many months of negotiation, petitioning, lobbying and coercion in Paris, it was all for nought because the Republicans, and several Democrats, refused to accept this reinterpretation of America’s role in the world, or the rights and responsibilities she would have therein.

It shouldn’t surprise you to learn that historians have grappled ever since with the question not only of why the US proved incapable of approving the TOV and the League which was housed within that Treaty, but also the key issue of the extent of WW’s responsibility for that failure. Was it, in other words, Wilson’s fault that the TOV did not get passed in Congress, and could another President, one less arrogant, more willing to compromise, more realistic about his prospects, enjoyed success? These questions are severely weighted, and in my limited experience of travelling through the US – that is, the week I spent in Boston – I was both fascinated and somewhat surprised to learn that many Americans still have strong feelings towards Wilson today, and most of them tend to be negative. As is my usual style, when people feel negatively towards a certain historical figure, my curiosity leads me first and foremost to learn why they feel this way, and secondly to discern whether these negative feelings are in fact justified.

And by that, I don’t mean in a political sense, but in terms of empirical analysis – in other words, does Wilson legitimately justify this hostility because of the things he did, or were actions and failures unfairly subscribed to him which were out of his control. Was he, as I imagined myself arguing during one of my earlier PhD dissertation proposals, doomed from the start in his quest to redefine America’s relationship with the world, or does this failure rest of his shoulders and the shortcomings of his character? We are not, of course, going to answer all of these questions today, but we are going to trace the development of Wilson’s campaign in the US during February and March, before he returned home. Undertaking this narrative will help us wrap up the domestic American element and put a pin in it while events take shape back in Paris. They will also serve to add more meat onto the bones of Wilson’s struggles and shortcomings, as well as his occasional successes. At the same time, an in-depth examination into the precise course of Wilson’s tour of America is not necessary, so we will only be providing the highlights, and giving instead an interesting profile of a character which I believe you will find useful as an instrument to explore what Wilson did do wrong, and where he was blamed, even by his fans, for these errors.

This episode, while it won’t address the depths of Wilson’s character, will unwrap some aspects of that man which we haven’t delved too deeply into before. To clarify, there are some historians who look as deeply as a Freudian analysis of Wilson’s relationship with his father to understand his failings in 1919, while other historians focus on the decline in his health and wonder at what might have been had a stronger President been at the helm.[[1]](#footnote-1) Rather than these debates, which are of course fascinating, we will ground our analysis in this episode on Wilson’s actual relationship with his rivals and allies in Washington. His contemporaries couldn’t even agree on his governing style – was he the so-called ‘lone hand’, or a man who listened to and took on board the wise counsel which he was offered? The historian William Allen White, who was present at the PPC as an American delegate, writing in 1924, provided the following view:

But our player sat in the game and played a lone hand. He played with no one at his shoulder to check him. Time and again he had come out of the Council of Ten or out of the meeting of the Four or of the Five, realizing afterward and freely admitting in private that he had agreed to something or disagreed with something too hastily. Yet he was of the temperament that must play a lone hand. His relations with men were cordial, but never fraternal; he attracted followers rather than friends; he had experts, but he tolerated no partners. He could ask advice, but no one in the sacred circle of his acquaintance had the royal right to call him a fool and live. So he sat and played his lone hand in a game whose cards he knew but slightly; whose players, banded against him, he never could meet as cronies; and whose ill-gotten gains he despised.[[2]](#footnote-2)

It seems pretty damning, and yet, according to Wilson’s private secretary Joseph Tumulty, this view of Wilson was entirely unjustified, and was not supported by evidence.

It has often been said by certain gentlemen who were associated with President Wilson on the other side that he was unyielding and dogmatic, that he insisted upon playing a "lone hand," that he was secretive and exclusive, and that he ignored the members of the Peace Commission and the experts who accompanied him to the Conference. Contrary to this criticism, after an uninterrupted, continuous, and most intimate association with him for eleven years, an association which brought me into close contact with him in the most delicate crises through which his administration and the nation passed, a time which threw upon the Chief Executive of the nation a task unparalleled in the history of the world, I wish to say that there is no franker or more open-minded man, nor one less dogmatic in his opinion than Woodrow Wilson. In him the desire for information and guidance is a passion. Indeed, the only thing he resents is a lack of frankness upon the part of his friends, and no man is more ready courageously to act and to hold to his opinions after he has obtained the necessary information upon which he bases his position. It is his innate modesty and a certain kind of shyness that people mistake for coldness and aloofness. He is not a good fellow in the ordinary sense of that term. His friendship does not wear the cheap or tawdry trappings of the politician, but there is about it a depth of genuineness and sincerity, that while it does not overwhelm you, it wins you and holds you. But the permanent consideration upon which this friendship is based is sincerity and frankness.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This conflicting image of Wilson as, on the one hand, the single-minded visionary who spurned all help or advice, and on the other, the friendly, reasonable man who wished to do the right thing, presents us with several problems if building an accurate, sensible portrait of the President is our mission. Mercifully, this VAP isn’t tasked with finding the real WW, so we won’t have to go too deep into the weeds, but it should be said that the image of Wilson as a man unwilling to delegate was proved false from the moment he left Paris. Wilson had, after all, just left Edward House in charge, and what was more, he instructed his friend that negotiations were not to grind to a halt while he was gone. The PPC would continue, but if you’ll remember what happened in yesterday’s episode, then you’ll know this instruction was only conditional. Wilson wanted the conference to continue its work, yet he also wanted to have the final say on what was decided. House even took the time to record in his diary the contortion on Wilson’s face when he suggested that everything could be solved within four weeks while the President was back in America. After reading this reaction, House modified his expression by exclaiming that, of course, nothing final would be decided without Wilson’s say-so, but that questions would be brought to their virtual end in the meantime.

To facilitate quicker communications, the President would speak through coded telegram with House, bypassing altogether his SOS Robert Lansing, and in the process, awkwardly heaping additional responsibility onto House’s shoulders.[[4]](#footnote-4) But it wasn’t Lansing that House would have to worry about, it was instead men like HCL and TR, who had made it clear several years before that they did not like the President, did not believe in his policies, and would oppose them at every possible turn. If Wilson was to be successful in combating these political titans, he would have to call upon his own reserves of patience, to rebuild useful relationships which might have lapsed, to lean heavily upon the progressive elements of the Democratic Party faithful, and to refrain at all costs from rubbing people the wrong way. It is a fundamentally important chapter in the story not only of the TOV, but also, consequently, of world history, that Wilson failed in this task.

Even before he arrived in Boston, Wilson had dealt with arguably the most notable other export from MA, HCL. Lodge had a history of hostility towards Wilson which was based first and foremost on disagreements over American foreign policy. Lodge had always believed that America should have entered the war from the beginning on the allied side, and he rallied against the League idea, because he upheld that American interests were better served by forging a league of democratic states linked by military alliance and beefed up by strong East European states on Germany’s flank. This approach meant his views were more in line with the French than he might have realised, but it was with the British that Lodge and his close friend Theodore Roosevelt closely identified. Much of this identification came from the two men’s admiration of the British Empire and its navy, but it was also naturally influenced by Lodge’s anti-German sentiments that exploded in intensity following the violation of Belgian neutrality. As Britain’s navy guarded the seas against other German violations, Lodge supported her. In 1915, when the sinking of the Lusitania affected a crisis in German-American relations, Lodge was far from alone when he advocated American intervention in the war then and there. Though the crisis eventually calmed down, Lodge’s feelings did not, and he blamed Wilson for failing to intervene. The President’s cowardice was the problem, Lodge insisted, and in 1915 referred to Wilson as…

…a self-seeking, unprincipled, egotistical, timid, and narrow-minded politician. He has a talent for felicitous expression and for the mouthing of high-sounding principles, but he has no policy other than his own aggrandizement. In…foreign affairs he is a coward…At a time of national danger the only interest he has is self-interest.[[5]](#footnote-5)

It may not surprise you to learn that Lodge was himself far from perfect. Hailing from the blue-blooded New England stock, Lodge had as many strong opinions as he had successful investments, and there was perhaps no better description of his character than that penned by Margaret Macmillan, who noted simply that Lodge was ‘short, bad tempered and a tremendous snob.’[[6]](#footnote-6) But Wilson would have to deal with this ‘tremendous snob’ if he was to have any chance of acquiring the approval that he needed for the League to pass Congress. Insufferable as he may have found him, Wilson knew that Lodge boasted influential ties in the Republican Party, and that he sat on the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee. In spite of his passionate diatribes, Lodge was no firebrand, and represented the solid middle of the Republican Party. If Lodge was the body of the Party, then its two more extreme wings were represented, on the one hand, by those largely from the Midwest who viewed with disdain any suggestions of accommodation or extensive contact with the decadent old world, and on the other, the internationalists, largely from the East Coast, who supported the League enthusiastically, if not unconditionally.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Theodore Roosevelt’s apprehension and then loathing towards Wilson was based on similar grounds to that of Lodge, but Roosevelt had remained vocal, even once America entered the war, that Wilson posed a danger to the world as a visionary who despised conflict to the point of mania. Roosevelt imagined Wilson doing all it took to remove America from the war, even if that meant endangering what he and Lodge found so appealing – the British Empire. What was more, Roosevelt was in regular contact with his friend Rudyard Kipling, to whom he made clear in a letter written in early 1918 that ‘the delays and incompetencies which are robbing our intervention of three-fourths of its efficacy’ could largely be blamed on a president who ‘is a cold and selfish hypocrite, a clever and adroit demagogue, and wedded to the belief that rhetoric is action.’ In spite of Wilson’s ‘entire inability as an administrator’, Roosevelt charged that he managed ‘to convince himself after each speech that “peace without victory” or whatever the moment's oratorical fervour has made him declare, has become a fact…he is very great in seeming to win the war…but he is entirely willing to pose as the great peacemaker if this seems more personally profitable.’ Roosevelt also insisted that Wilson would extricate America from the war as soon as was possible and profitable: ‘he would eat all his past declarations without even looking uncomfortable.’ Roosevelt added that Wilson ‘does not mean [to do] anything effective against the Mitteleuropa world menace…just at present he is underhandedly endeavouring to urge…peace terms which, under the guise of high sounding phrases, shall leave Germany substantially victorious.’[[8]](#footnote-8)

Evidently, Roosevelt had been wrong about this aspect of Wilson’s character, for while it had pained him to make war, he did not shy away from seeing it to its successful conclusion once America was well into it. We know this not necessarily because Wilson refused to give up, but because his entire reason for getting involved, and the real hook which reeled him in, was the argument that stated if America got involved in the war, her President would have a leading role shaping the peace. Since Wilson knew that to give up on the war meant to give up on his vision of the peace, it was impossible that he would behave as Roosevelt charged, yet the British War Cabinet still charged that while Roosevelt’s picture was ‘rather one-sided and exaggerated’, there was ‘no doubt, something in’ the former President’s arguments.[[9]](#footnote-9) Writing in the Presidential Studies Quarterly, the historian Edward Parsons opined that a combination of Roosevelt’s declining health, in addition to the death of his favourite son Quinten in July 1918, and the crippling of another, engendered a pathological hatred for Wilson which not even Lodge could match. By late 1918, when Wilson had lost Congress to the Republicans, Roosevelt did not try to hide his glee, but he did at least save his most volcanic descriptions of the President to private friends, saying in December 1918 that Wilson was a ‘supple, adroit, conscienceless creature’ who would, if unchecked, ‘do lasting damage and…acquire thereby lasting fame…Wilson is a cold tortuous schemer and intriguer without any physical courage, but with very much of that moral courage which comes from entire unscrupulousness and shamelessness.’ Roosevelt concluded that he is ‘completely given over to the service of the devil [and is] pretty well cared for by his master.’[[10]](#footnote-10)

Interestingly, Roosevelt had been loudly critical of the entire League scheme and of the 14 points which had first introduced it as a war aim. Roosevelt insisted that the League ‘played into the hands of the pro-Germans and pacifists who are only waiting…to clamour that…no one must be punished and all future wars prevented by a League of which Germany, Austria, Turkey, and Russia would be four of the guarantors.’ It was of course far easier for Roosevelt to engage with this campaign of misinformation so long as Wilson had remained tight-lipped about what form the League would take; it was only on the eve of travelling to Paris in December 1918 that Wilson confirmed the CPs would only be allowed into the League following significant concessions.

Yet Roosevelt hadn't stopped there, petitioning the Senate during all of October 1918 to pressure Wilson to break off relations with Germany, to ask not for an armistice, but to dictate the peace to Berlin and ‘to repudiate the so-called and various other similar utterances by the President.’[[11]](#footnote-11) Roosevelt along with Lodge had both rejoiced at the news of Wilson’s heavy defeat in Congress, and Roosevelt had openly gloated that his work had helped expose the President for what he truly was – a naïve, weak-willed coward unsure of what he wanted and prone to fits of fancy. We will recall that Wilson changed his tone towards Germany in the final days of October, and attempted to harden it in a bid to demonstrate the lack of base for Roosevelt’s claims. This did not have the desired effect, but Roosevelt took credit for the President’s modification in tone as well. In the weeks leading up to Wilson departure for America, Roosevelt penned and supported all manner of scurrilous rumours, such as one which upheld Wilson’s insistence to create a LON with Wilson at its head, Germany as a full member and an economic alliance between Germany and the US which would ostracise Britain. Roosevelt loudly opposed Wilson’s naval construction programme announced in October 1918 on the basis that, according to remarks he made to Kipling, Britain ‘should have the largest fleet in the world’, while ‘our own should come second in size.’[[12]](#footnote-12)

Considering all this, there was absolutely no chance in hell that Roosevelt would ever have seen Paris as an American delegate, nor would he ever have managed to sit in the same room as Wilson for extended periods of time. The question of what would have happened had Roosevelt simply arrived in Paris is better answered by the DG, which you can of course keep up with every Friday, as listener Charles was brave enough to see how the President and his fiercest critic would coexist, selecting Roosevelt as his avatar as he did so. Cheap plugs notwithstanding, it is worth considering for a moment the impact which all of this vitriol must have had on Wilson, and even before he had made landfall in Boston. He knew that the city’s mayor was a Democrat, and that according to House, Boston was eager to do him honour, but we have also alluded to the fact that one of the most fervent opponents of Wilson, HCL, hoisted the Republican flag above MA for several years. Interestingly though, Wilson would also have known that MA was not entirely lost; waiting for him in Boston was MA’s own David I. Walsh, a progressive Democratic Senator who was as loyal as one could be towards their president and his vision. In David Walsh, Wilson at least had a friend, or did he?

The case of Senator David Walsh may seem like a strange or unnecessary issue to talk about in an episode like this; for those unfamiliar with him, as was I before researching this episode, you may be completely in the dark as to who he was at all. Who he was and a detailed bio of the man are not necessary though, what is necessary for us to know is that Walsh serves as something of a blueprint for us in explaining how Wilson lost his treaty fight. Walsh, like so many other progressives in the DP, started out as a loyal Wilson disciple, only in the end to turn against the President’s vision and neglect to support it when it mattered most. But just how loyal was David Walsh? Well, upon securing the Democratic nomination for the Senate in late October, Walsh before the assembled crowd that ‘I pledge, I shall endeavour with all the ability and strength which I possess to assist…President Wilson in the…solution of those great problems…when peace shall come.’ Further, Walsh promised his ‘unwavering support to President Wilson and his world work’ and vowed that he would leave ‘nothing undone to help lighten the burdens of him whom Providence has chosen to direct us in these momentous times.’[[13]](#footnote-13) On 5th November 1918, recorded the historian John Flannagan Jr, while the story everywhere else in the US was one of Democratic defeat…

…David I. Walsh became the first Democratic Senator from Massachusetts since before the Civil War. Many factors contributed to his victory not the least of which included his progressive gubernatorial record, his ability as an orator and his Catholic religion which proved to be of especial importance in the state's large Irish and immigrant communities. Yet, victory was due, in no small measure, to the candidate's professions of loyalty to the President, his pledges of future support, and Wilson's personal endorsement…[[14]](#footnote-14)

To those Democrats that turned against Wilson, numerous factors could be underlined to explain the change. In New England for instance, heavy immigration from Ireland and Italy created significant lobby groups and aroused a great deal of sympathy when the interests of both these groups were denied at the peace conference. Yet, while this may help to partially explain the Catholic Walsh’s change of mind over only the space of a few months, another more significant and important explanation is found in Walsh’s own high moral code, which he felt that Wilson, by giving things away to the Europeans in the name of the League, had violated. As John Flannagan wrote: ‘From the full record there emerges a graphic view of a man with a deep, personal adherence to idealistic, progressive principles – principles that were allegedly bartered away by an harassed President at the council tables of Europe.’ This is an aspect of Wilson’s behaviour which we touched on in the last episode – the idea that Wilson’s well-known determination to acquire the League made him vulnerable, and liable to commit to concessions which actually went against his original principles in order to get it.

This irony goes full circle when we deduce that Wilson’s concessions in this regard alienated many of his supporters, which led to a situation where the President did not get what he wanted, and the US refused to join the League, while the circle becomes even more rounded when we look at the fact that Britain and France were subsequently stuck with a League which only existed because they had hoped to use it as a bargaining chip to get what they really wanted from the US President. But this is only one interpretation, and does not factor in the additional complications, such as genuine belief in the League among some segments of the British population, and the additional genuine objections which some in Wilson’s party had to the League’s potential constraints on American freedom of action, rather than their objections to the principle of a peace-making LON per se.

On 26th February 1919, as part of Wilson’s welcome tour in Boston, David Walsh exclaimed that he was proud to have Wilson as his President, since it meant a ‘restoration to the world of freedom and equality, the quality of which the world has never seen.’ On a St Patrick’s Day address, Walsh even brought scorn upon himself when he urged those Irish-American and Italian immigrants to remember that they were first and foremost Americans, and not to let their heritage cloud their judgement of the President or his ideas by allowing ‘partisanship to come before patriotism.’ Strong and resolute Walsh apparently was, cracks were already beginning to appear in his stance; in this same speech he suggested that changes could be made to the League Covenant in the future, a Covenant which was by then being presented to the PPC again. Over the summer of 1919, Walsh became more opposed to the League, based on the unavoidable fact that America had not fulfilled her promises to the world which the FPs speech had laid down. As John Flannagan continued:

Throughout the entire debate over acceptance of the League, Walsh held consistently to this idealistic stance. He felt America's reasons for going to war were betrayed. It was the President, after all, who called for the "settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship" upon a basis of "the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned." Wilson had further insisted that "all who sit down at the peace table" must be prepared to pay the "price" for peace. "That price is impartial justice in every item of the settlement, no matter whose interest is crossed; and not only impartial justice, but also the satisfaction of the several peoples whose fortunes are dealt with.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Perhaps, one could accuse Senator Walsh of judging Wilson too harshly – after all, in the tough world in which GC and DLG operated, was there ever any realistic chance that the president could have gotten all he wanted? From where we’re standing, it’s relatively easy to see that the PPC represented mission impossible for so many delegations, and Wilson’s was only one among many who felt let down by those in charge. Interestingly, Flannagan interprets Senator Walsh’s stance as ‘pure Wilsonianism’, or that version of WW’s philosophy which had done the rounds before the president had gone to Europe and seen for himself how hard his mission would be. Wilson’s original vision by spring 1919, and by the time he returned to Paris, had been tempered by experience and the ruthless nature of post-war diplomacy – a style of diplomacy which, don’t forget, he had loudly criticised in the past. The reality check which Wilson received when he realised that it would not be as easy to change the world as he had hoped was made all the more painful by the fact that the President never seems to have admitted that the mission was nigh on impossible. If he had been more up front about the insurmountable challenges, and of his original naivety, then perhaps his allies would have stayed with him.

Yet, Wilson never admitted defeat, with the result being that his fellow ideologues became horrified at the unannounced transformation of his doctrine; the President attempted to carry on as though everything was fine, leading his old friends to suspect that he been soundly beaten or, worse, that he had never believed in those principles to begin with, and had used them merely as bargaining chips to purchase the League. Before we criticise Walsh’s naivety, we should bear in mind that Wilson was the man who at one stage had exclaimed ‘There be no compromise. No halfway decision would be tolerable. No halfway decision is conceivable. These are the ends which the associated peoples of the world are fighting which must be conceded them before there can be peace.’ The message of no compromise, and high ideals, and transparency, and fairness, and equality, was far too good to be true in the early 20th century, but this had not stopped either Wilson or his fellow idealogues from dreaming. Perhaps if Senator Walsh had come to Paris with Wilson, he would have seen for himself that the old dream was precisely that, and that only a diluted form of this dream, with a LON to hold everything together, could now be achieved.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Senator Walsh’s disillusionment with his President is representative of how many Europeans came to feel about WW in the months to come, particularly in the case of the Parisians, who had once cheered all appearances of his likeness, but who, by the onset of March, remained painfully silent when his image was superimposed upon their cinema screens. Wilson’s experience of America during that fortnight was not much better, and hints about this disillusionment were subtly being dropped if he cared to look, while open opponents sharpened their knives. In Senator Walsh’s mind, to compromise such American principles as laid down in the FPs "in the hope to obtain peace" was to him "to be forgetful of the fact that to barter justice is to sell the soul of the nations of the world.”[[17]](#footnote-17) What this meant for Wilson was that he faced opposition not only from those in the Republican Party that believed his vision of the League went too far, but also from elements within the DP who believed that it did not go far enough.

To his own surprise, by the end of his journey Wilson found himself sitting on the fence, unable to achieve satisfaction for the Irish, forced to hand portions of China to the Japanese, failing to pick apart the British or French empires, and refusing at all times to admit that he had come up short. Yet he had also spent so many weeks crafting this League charter, and he had made himself ill through continuous 12 or sometimes 16 hour days, where the conversations bled into debates and the arguments lost their edge with the collapse of one’s voice. It was a brutal, harsh and unfulfilling experience so much at odds with what he expected – had he really brought America into the war for this? To be taken advantage of, to be manipulated, to be ignored? The bitterness of his defeats would only sink in in subsequent months, but Wilson certainly returned to Paris on 14th March a different man than when he had left.

The American tour had really been an exercise in publicity and coercion in support of the League, and it contained regular speeches in addition to some interparty dinners which did not go down very well. ‘Your dinner to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was a failure as far as getting together was concerned’,[[18]](#footnote-18) Wilson remarked acidly to House, in one of the first things he said to his old friend after not seeing him for a month. The message was clear – *your* dinner had been a failure Mr House, it had not been *my* fault for failing to meet the Republicans halfway, for failing to adhere to my principles, or for taking an arrogant, self-indulgent tone throughout the dinner gathering which rubbed everyone the wrong way. House had suggested the idea of Wilson hosting the dinner to bring those elements of American politics together, and it was an easy thing for Wilson then to blame his friend for what transpired afterwards, but the real kicker in the room had been the president’s overbearing character.

One attendee noted that they felt afterwards ‘as though they were being reproved for neglect of their lessons by a very frigid teacher in a Sunday school class’ – hardly the impression one should give off when trying to persuade the sceptics and rivals to one’s vision.[[19]](#footnote-19) Others complained that the drink on offer had been cheap and minimal, the cigars reluctantly or sparingly passed around. These were minor issues of course – Wilson hadn't come to America to hand out cigars, and his opponents hadn't attended a dinner with him to smoke the best Columbians money could buy, but it all added to the impression which many had already had of him. It confirmed their worst fears and exposed Wilson’s worst weaknesses; unused, perhaps, to facing criticism or meeting his detractors, Wilson came across as arrogant and cold when he so badly needed to be genuine, considerate and sincere. It is unlikely it would have made much of a difference, because as far as Wilson was concerned, compromise was not within his character…except of course it was, when it came to the FPs, and self-determination for all states, and the reparations issue, and creating a fair peace for Germany, and ending empire, and providing a just and equal new world.

And yet the weird thing is, as Wilson had insisted, most of the public in America still bought into the principle of a LON which would preserve peace with America playing a leading role. The problem was that the public did not rule, the politicians did, and most of them were as confused as they were angered by Wilson’s approaches. They must have wondered why he came back to America at all, if his performance in getting their attention and affirmation was destined to be so shoddy. Wilson had never been especially good at dealing with people who he found disagreeable, and soon he began to see all of Congress in this light. On 4th March, just as he prepared to return to Paris, it was learned of that HCL was preparing a round robin which was eventually signed by two thirds of the RP, and which declared the uncompromising opposition of this considerable segment of American political life to Wilson’s vision. It was a devastating blow, not least because its results were then communicated back to Paris, and arrived before the President.

Wilson would arrive back in Paris on 14th March and find a very different capital than the one which had once so rapturously welcomed him two months’ before. In spite of his shortcomings and trials though, Wilson had at least been safe. One of the major causes of the disruption of the SC while the President had been away was the sudden removal of the French premier GC from the mix. Clemenceau’s exit, and the resulting postponement of several issues, had not been the result of illness, but assassination – a grim reminder of the anarchic state of Europe outside the cold walls of Paris, and a reminder as well, for those that cared to look, of how they had all come to be here in the first place. Unlike his infamous predecessor in Sarajevo nearly five years before though, Clemenceau survived what he insisted on referring to as the ‘accident’. Not until the Big Three made their return could matters return to normalcy, and some definitive progress be made. As everyone had by now learned though, fruit ripened very slowly indeed in 1919.

1. These debates are gathered and analysed in an article by Lloyd E. Ambrosius, ‘Woodrow Wilson's Health and the Treaty Fight, 1919-1920’, *The International History Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Feb., 1987), pp. 73-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. William Allen White, *Woodrow Wilson: The Man, His Times and His Task* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), pp. 389-390. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1921), pp. 354-355. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Arthur Walworth, *Wilson and His Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), pp. 145-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quoted in Edward B. Parsons, ‘Some International Implications of the 1918 Roosevelt-Lodge Campaign Against Wilson and a Democratic Congress’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Part I: American Foreign Policy for the 1990s and Part II: T. R., Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1901-1919 (WINTER 1989), pp. 141-157; p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Macmillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid*, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Parsons, ‘Some International Implications’, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Ibid*, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid*, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid*, p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Ibid*, pp. 144-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. John H. Flannagan Jr. ‘The Disillusionment of a Progressive: U. S. Senator David I. Walsh and the League of Nations Issue, 1918-1920’, *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), pp. 483-504; p. 483. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Ibid*, p. 484. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Ibid*, p. 491. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Ibid*, p. 492. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid*, p. 492. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. House, *Papers*, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Macmillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)