

MacDonald Soon to Know How Woodrow Wilson Felt; Also Faces Repudiation

by Walter G. Fuller (*Special Correspondent of The Eagle*)

London, September 7 — One of the things that the average Englishman has never been able to understand about America is that it is somehow possible under the Constitution for the President of the United States to hold one set of views and to hold them pretty strongly (as President Wilson did about the League of Nations, for example), and for the Congress of the United States to hold sternly to quite another opinion, and to oppose its view against that of the President, and by its opposition render his desires of no avail (as Congress did in the matter of America joining the League).

That very un-English state of affairs has always puzzled Englishmen, and they have turned in despair from trying to understand how such things could be.

But today the average Englishman is beginning to learn that such a situation is possible under his own form of government, and a great light is dawning upon him. Once again in the long history of mankind, experience is teaching a lesson.

MacDonald Next on List

In a very few weeks, Premier MacDonald is likely to find himself in the same position in his relations with the House of Commons as President Wilson was in his relations with the United States Senate on his return from his treaty-making expedition to Paris in 1919.

It was because of the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant of the League that the Senate repudiated the President, and it will be over the recently signed Russian Agreement that the House of Commons will repudiate the Premier.

There is no way out of the difficulty. The clash and the Premier's defeat are inevitable. The Agreement must, of course, come before parliament for ratification as soon as the new season opens early in October. Tories and Liberals are pledged to a man to oppose every line and every dot and comma of it. The Labour party on the other hand is pledged to fight for it tooth and nail.

Document Already Signed

MacDonald has already signed the document, but that will not make the slightest difference. By its vote the House will inevitably repudiate the whole thing, and will ignore the Premier's signature as if it were that of the youngest office boy in the British Foreign Office. The parallel with the Senate's repudiation of Woodrow Wilson is exact, and a good many Englishmen will be quick to see it.

Such a situation is without precedent in British parliamentary annals. Hitherto the Prime Minister of the day has always been at the head of a party that has had a clear majority over all other parties in the House. It has followed, therefore, that a Prime Minister's signature to any bond or agreement was certain to be honoured in Parliament, for there was not the slightest doubt about his being able to obtain the sanction and approval of the majority of the House of Commons when it came to the test of a vote.

Clearly then MacDonald is in for a bad time. Nobody enjoys the experience of being repudiated, and MacDonald will bitterly resent his Agreement being treated like a "scrap of paper," and his signature treated as of no account. But all this is only another of the painful results of the three-party system, and of being in the very doubtful position of leader of a minority government.

How Will He Take Defeat?

While everybody agrees that this Anglo-Soviet Agreement will be rejected in toto by the Commons, and that MacDonald will be repudiated, nobody knows what will be the outcome of this rejection or how MacDonald will take his defeat.

There are in fact only two courses constitutionally open to the Premier. Either he may turn the other cheek to the smiter and accept his defeat and pass on to the next business — a difficult policy for a man of MacDonald's highly strung and sensitive temperament — or he may immediately dissolve Parliament and

appeal to the country.

This latter policy while it has its attractions – it is dramatic, courageous and exciting – is also risky, for who can tell what would be the outcome of a general election in which the making of an agreement with Russia would be the central question? Bolshevism is a word that is feared by the vast majority of all classes throughout the length and breadth of England, Scotland and Wales, and it is very unlikely that the Labour Party would come back with an increased representation in the House after battling at the polls over the “Bolshies.”

May Swallow Pride

Under the circumstances, therefore, MacDonald may be realistic enough to swallow his pride, and see his famous Agreement cast into the limbo, and then turn with a sigh to face some of the other problems that beset him – the Ulster boundary, for instance.

But there is another factor in the case that should not be lost sight of. What will the Russians say of a country and a government

and a statesman who will appoint representatives and experts by the dozen to discuss the terms of an agreement, draft these terms in an acceptable form and then formally sign the document, only to have the whole thing utterly repudiated only a few weeks later?

Will not the Russians say some hard things about English duplicity and untrustworthiness as the English used to say only a few years ago about America when the United States Senate repudiated President Wilson’s signature to the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant? And it will be just as hard to explain to the average Russian the intricate ways of the House of Commons, and the difficulties of carrying on a minority government, as it was to explain to the average Englishman the workings of the American Constitution with its elaborate system of “checks and balances.”

One by one the summer days are passing, and soon Parliament will reassemble. The barometer prophesies “squally weather.”

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