

Forty Years On: The Cahan Blunder Re-Examined

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On 6 December 1932 The Hon. C. H. Cahan, Secretary of State in the Bennett government, was sent to Geneva to represent Canada at a special meeting of the League of Nations Assembly summoned to discuss the Lytton Report. Until that time Canada had pursued the type of "back-seat" policy in the Sino-Japanese dispute which Mackenzie King was to develop more skilfully. Ever since Japanese forces had overrun the whole of Manchuria in September 1931, the government had avoided comment on a dispute which the League Council struggled feebly to contain. When the clash of arms spread to Shanghai early in 1932, China had reacted more sharply to the Japanese aggression and switched its appeal to the League for redress under Article XI to Articles X and XV. Under these articles the League could apply sanctions. From Tokyo Herbert Marler, the Canadian minister, cabled that the situation was "extremely serious." He thought the Japanese had gone "too far," but hoped that, if the dispute were referred to the Assembly, Canada would not adopt "too decided a stand." To do otherwise, he suggested, would not "... serve our interest, in Japan where, up to the present we are considered entirely neutral." Ottawa replied that it appreciated "the force of his representations" but pointed out "the situation may develop where necessity of observance of international engagements will become of overruling importance." Marler, who remained consistent in giving Japan the benefit of the doubt, was uneasy about what the United States might do if Japan made further advances and asked for instructions "as to the course of action I should pursue in the event of Japanese refusal to accede to representations of other powers." Ottawa replied "it did not consider any action necessary at the present time."¹

The question was first raised in the House of Commons on 10 February 1932, when J. S. Woodsworth asked what Canada's policy was. No reply was vouchsafed until ten days later, when he was informed that Canada

¹ Documents on Canadian External Relations, vol. 5, 1931-1935, ed. Alex I. Inglis (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1973), p. 305. Hereafter cited as Docs. 5.

was "gravely concerned" but preferred not to state its position when the dispute was still in the hands of the League Council. Bennett pompously added "every step His Majesty's Government in Canada can take for the maintenance and preservation of peace will be taken."²

When the crisis was placed on the agenda of a special session of the Assembly in March 1932, Sir George Perley was appointed the Canadian delegate. He was already in Geneva for the discussion on Disarmament. The veteran Conservative was authorized to use his discretion about participating in the debate. If he did so, he should argue that the Assembly should not assess responsibility or propose punitive measures, but rather carry out as vigorously as possible "the mediatory and preventive functions of the League." Recent events had confirmed "the traditional Canadian doubts about the value and practicability of sanction provisions." Moreover the League should bear in mind the problem of acting without American cooperation. Marler naturally shared these views. He agreed that Japan's actions in Shanghai "should be censured and not condoned" but hoped that the Canadian speech "should be of the most moderate character." Sir George, while prepared to criticize Japan "in temperate but definite words," was in agreement. Since the government did not wish to declare openly that the Covenant had been violated, which would justify the application of sanctions, he was to reiterate the view expressed by the Council which ruled out any recognition of territory seized in violation of the territorial integrity of a League member. By doing so he would be in agreement with the Stimson doctrine "of non-recognition," which would gratify Washington. Accordingly, on March 8, Sir George avoided any harsh censure of Japan and urged the Assembly "to affirm as solemnly as 'possible' the Council resolution."³ The Assembly then adjourned to await the Report of the Lytton Commission on the Far Eastern Crisis which the Council had authorized the previous autumn.⁴

On April 7, Woodsworth again asked for a statement of policy. Bennett fobbed him off by a mock modest disclaimer of Canada passing judgment "with the slight knowledge we possess," but promised to make a statement later.⁵ He did not do so until the close of the session, when it was customary to examine the estimates of the Department of External Affairs. On that occasion Woodsworth complained that "Canada had not taken

² Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 19 February 1932, pp. 367-68.

³ Docs. 5, pp. 306-11.

⁴ League of Nations, Minute of the Fifth Meeting, General Commission, Special Session of the Assembly, 8 March 1932, p. 7.

⁵ Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 7 April 1932, pp. 1825-26.

the stand she might have taken" and warned that "through our inactivity we are laying the foundation for a war in the future." Bennett replied by quoting Perley's "admirable address," which, he claimed, represented "the sober, intelligent, and moderate judgment of the Canadian people." Well aware of the fears of involvement in an area remote from Canada's immediate interests, he asked the rhetorical question: "Would you in a position of responsibility accept what is involved in endeavouring to put these sanctions in force against either China or Japan?" His own answer was: "For my part I confess I would not."⁶

On October 2 the Lytton Commission submitted its report. For a body which was composed exclusively of representatives of Great Powers, including the United States, it was unexpectedly frank in its comments. It dismissed as unfounded the Japanese version of the "Manchurian Incident," and was equally firm in rejecting the claim that there has been a spontaneous movement for independence in Manchuria. What was prescribed was greater autonomy for Manchuria, the withdrawal of all armed forces from its domain, economic cooperation between China and Japan and international assistance for the economic reconstruction of the former. It was pretty obvious that Japan had already committed herself too deeply to accept *in toto* such a report. In fact she had already recognized "Manchukuo" as a state allied to Japan. The time for equivocation was running out in Geneva.

As might be expected, Woodsworth was quick off the mark for a statement of policy and got the dusty answer that "it is not thought desirable to enter into any discussion at this time with respect to a matter of this kind." In making a legalistic argument that the question was sub judice the Prime Minister twice quoted extracts from a recent speech by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon. In so doing he made a precedent which might well have influenced Cahan in his subsequent action. For the first time the government was faced by a Liberal interjection. Ernest Lapointe was not prepared to let pass unchallenged the claim that "Canada should not prejudge this case by antecedent public declarations." But Bennett refused to be drawn. On the principle of the weaker your case the more vehement your argument, he declared that "beyond all peradventure of doubt the government should not make a declaration of policy when the policy needs must to some extent be governed by considerations that will arise through discussion that will take place in a tribunal [the choice of the noun was surely intentional] which ultimately

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 May, pp. 3436-37.

has to decide.”⁷ At that time the League Council was in the middle of a week’s debate on the report which, with suspicious alacrity, it referred to the Assembly. For that purpose the Assembly was to convene on December 6.

On December 2 Secretary of State C. H. Cahan, who had attended the regular session of that body and was then in Paris discussing the details of a trade agreement with France, was notified that he should return to Geneva to be the Canadian delegate. In view of his unexpected behaviour in that role a brief assessment of his background is essential. Cahan, then 71, was a Nova Scotian by birth. After a brief career in journalism and politics, during which he had led the Tory opposition in the legislature, he had spent thirteen years in Mexico and Central America. There his legal ability helped him make a fortune in public utility enterprises. He appears to have acquired an abiding distrust of weak and unstable governments. In 1909 he moved to Montreal where the *Canadian Courier* noted of him “As a promoter a winning hand, as a corporation lawyer a great success.”⁸ By the standards of that time he would rank as a Tory Imperialist. As a young man he had been the Honorary Secretary of the Halifax branch for the Imperial Federation League. As an old one, in 1937, at a meeting in Montreal of the Royal Empire Society he sharply criticized the Governor-General Lord Tweedsmuir for having said, “A Canadian’s first loyalty is not to the British Commonwealth of Nations but to Canada and Canada’s King and those who deny this are doing to my mind a great disservice to the Commonwealth.”⁹ It is not surprising that when he was elected to the House of Commons in 1925, he was regarded in Roger Graham’s words as an “exalted Conservative personage.”¹⁰ Cahan had ample self-confidence. When Arthur Meighen, whom he had never liked, resigned as leader Cahan sought to replace him. At the convention in 1927 he ran a poor third to R. B. Bennett. The latter was also unenthusiastic about the Montreal Tory. When he won the election of 1930, he ignored Cahan’s intimation that he was prepared to join the cabinet as Minister of Justice. Bennett tersely informed him that either he would accept the office of Secretary of State or remain a back bencher.¹¹

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 November, pp. 1368-69.

⁸ Quoted in H. J. Morgan, *Men and Women of Our Time* (Toronto, 1912) p. 189.

⁹ F. H. Soward, et al., *Canada in World Affairs; The Pre-war Years* (Toronto, 1941), p. 73.

¹⁰ Roger Graham, *Arthur Meighen*, vol. 2, (Toronto, 1963), p. 366.

¹¹ Richard Wilbur, *The Bennett Administration, 1930-1935*. The Canadian Historical Association; Historical Booklet No. 24 (Ottawa, 1969), p. 4.

Cahan took the position, but it is reasonable to infer he did not become a trusted adviser of his chief. His appointment in 1932 was on the grounds of availability.

In the usual instructions which were sent to the delegate he was told that the government was opposed to a discussion of sanctions and hoped the Assembly would "exhaust the possibility of conciliatory settlement." The recommendations of the Lytton commission appeared to Ottawa as "useful and reasonable" and their fairness and accuracy had not to any significant extent been challenged in the Council's debate. If Japan indicated a genuine desire to seek a solution consistent with League obligations, the League should avoid "precipitate action." Should Japan delay her response it would be "most unfortunate." Cahan was told not to make a statement until Ottawa had further considered the situation, to bear in mind the statement Perley had made in the spring, and to keep the government "continuously informed of developments." None of these admonitions was heeded by the minister.

At the same time as Cahan received his guidelines, W. D. Herridge, the Canadian minister in Washington, received a copy and was asked to seek an appointment with Henry L. Stimson, the Secretary of State, to discuss "informally and confidentially" the issues presented by the Lytton Report, of which an American was a co-author. The fact that Howard Ferguson, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, was not given a similar mission indicates the emphasis placed upon close cooperation with the United States in the Manchurian Crisis. If Herridge thought it helpful, he could inform Stimson of the line the government meant to follow in Geneva. Herridge's report on December 6 reflected his satisfaction. Stimson made a special point of seeing him and spoke "in strict confidence and with complete frankness." When he showed Stimson the instructions for Cahan, the American remarked that they "were in keeping with his general attitude." He regarded the Lytton Report as a "complete vindication" of the American position. Stimson explained that his government had been cautious in its contacts with the League to avert Japanese complaints but was anxious to cooperate, and was prepared to sit in with the Assembly Committee of Nineteen or any similar body to further conciliation. In his view Japan was playing for time while "digging in" in Manchuria. He deprecated the British "overemphasis" upon the possibility that Japan would break out again "unless she is dealt with in the most lenient and kindly fashion." Washington had stationed the U.S. fleet in Hawaii as "an assurance against arbitrary action on Japan's part." Should Japan object she could "go plump to hell."

The day after Herridge forwarded this report Cahan told Ottawa Sir John Simon had urged him to make a short statement. He was going over his draft that very evening but would keep in mind the advice he had previously received. Bennett was away when this cable reached Ottawa and Acting Prime Minister Perley agreed. Next morning Dr. Riddell, the experienced Canadian Advisory Officer in Geneva, saw the statement for the first time. A "hurried reading" convinced him it contained "a number of things that might better not be said." As he later told Skelton, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, given more time he "might have been able to smooth out some of the passages that seemed to make many people think we were taking sides with the Japanese." Cahan brusquely ignored his suggestions, declaring he "was prepared to take all the consequences of his statements."

In reporting to Ottawa on December 9 Cahan merely said that he and Bruce, the Australian delegate, had "expressed views consistent with the views of Sir John Simon and previously approved by him."¹² Simon makes no reference to this episode in his memoirs, which devote only one chapter to his five years as Foreign Secretary, and gloss over his own role as apologist for Japan on this occasion.¹³ Arnold Toynbee described the episode in his magisterial survey of International Affairs for this period and noted that all the spokesmen for the Great Powers displayed "a certain indulgence towards Japan." Of the smaller powers only Canada and Australia took the same line. Canada, said Toynbee, "gave the impression of condoning the Japanese military coup of September 1931" and, in his judgment, drew an unnecessary parallel between the British action in sending troops to China in 1927 to protect British nationals and the Japanese behaviour in Manchuria.¹⁴

What Cahan had done in his address was to stitch together awkwardly his personal views and his instructions. It was this device which prompted a British observer at the Assembly to comment that "Canada in a curious oration spoke strongly on both sides."¹⁵ Thus he began by saying, "the opinions I am about to express are more or less personal," but softened the admission by claiming that he thought they were "opinions in which my government will concur." After claiming that Canada had long-

¹² Docs. 5, pp. 313-18.

¹³ *Retrospect; The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Viscount Simon* (London, 1952).

¹⁴ A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1933* (Oxford, 1934), pp. 492-93.

¹⁵ Freda White, "The Far Eastern Dispute," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, April 1933, p. 427.

standing relations of amity and good will with the peoples of both China and Japan, he made the doubtful assertion that Canada had "a clearer understanding and keener understanding" of their respective attainments than prevailed in some other distant countries. To the resentment of the Chinese delegation and the satisfaction of the Japanese he doubted if China was in a position to comply with the requirements for member states prescribed in the League Covenant. After referring to the British action in 1927, he noted that Japan might have written "a similar letter with equal veracity and cogency about the treatment of its nationals in 1931." This comment was only partially balanced by the reminder that "it would now be impossible to justify the development of its own emergent action of the permanent occupation of any part of a neighbouring state or the permanent extension of its own territorial rights there." Then followed an obscure reference to the possible use by the League of an advisory opinion from the World Court. This criticism was qualified by a suggestion that the Assembly might not "wholly disregard the emphatic statement made . . . by Mr. Matsuo . . . that the Japanese government has not at any time allowed itself to be connected with the independence movement in Manchuria and did not then and does not now want Manchuria but . . . only desires the preservation of its right and interest thereto." Such a statement was, of course, quite in conflict with the Lytton report.

Cahan gave the report lukewarm praise, saying that on the whole its recommendations appeared "useful and reasonable." Unnecessarily and without supporting evidence he remarked that in two instances its statements of fact had been impugned. He also succumbed to trotting out what was satirically known in Geneva as the "Great Canadian Speech," which praised the merits of the International Joint Commission between the United States and Canada. It might be duplicated by a similar commission between China and Japan. With some exaggeration he described Canada as a "lifelong friend of Japan" who hoped that country would not take up "irrevocably" a position of isolation and hostility to the League. "In turn, if Japan showed a genuine readiness to seek a solution consistent with League obligations the latter should avoid precipitate action."¹⁶

Public reaction in Canada was based upon the limited summary cabled from Geneva but was definitely critical. Later the League of Nations

¹⁶ Journals of the Special Assembly of the League, 8 December 1932. The speech was republished in "Interdependence; A Quarterly Review of the League of Nations and International Affairs." League of Nations Society in Canada, March 1933, pp. 70-74.

Society in Canada devoted the March issue of its magazine *Interdependence* almost entirely to the Manchurian crisis. Eight prominent Canadians joined in a symposium headed "The Nations' Verdict Against Japan." It also carried the full text of the Cahan address and a critical article by myself devoted to that topic. I concluded by saying:

A speech which never once endorsed directly League principles, which departed from our position of last March, which singled out the injured party for most of the recrimination is not the sort of speech which some of his distinguished Conservative predecessors, like Sir Robert Borden, Sir George Foster or George Perley would have made. It falls far below the standard they would have set.¹⁷

In May I read a paper at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association on the broader subject "Canada and the Far Eastern Crisis." Only one of its sixteen pages was devoted to the Cahan faux pas but that was more than enough for the Secretary of State.

He got his revenge by telling the Dominion Archivist that he would not permit the Association's Annual Report to be published by his agency, as had been the case for years, if it contained my article. With some embarrassment the Archivist told me of his chief's ultimatum, and in order to secure the publication of the other papers I agreed to its omission. However, when fellow historians learned what had happened they made certain that, despite the Association's shaky finances, the report would be published elsewhere. Cahan's victory was a pyrrhic one. Later in 1933 the Institute of Pacific Relations held its biennial conference in Canada. The Canadian Institute of International Affairs decided to use my paper as a reference source for its delegation to the conference. As such it received better publicity at home and abroad than would otherwise have been the case.

Meanwhile the Department of External Affairs was taking stock of the unexpected developments created by the Cahan address. On December 13, Riddell cabled that it had caused "some disappointment here and was considered highly pro-Japanese." Norman Davis, the senior American delegate at the Disarmament Conference, was described as "somewhat perturbed." As Riddell put it, "he had not been able to understand why our attitude should be different from theirs." The American minister in Berne was "very much upset." In contrast, the Japanese minister in Ottawa, who had received a full report of the address, "warmly thanked" Skelton for Canada's stand. Not unexpectedly the Chinese Consul-General

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Frederic H. Soward, "The Address of the Honourable Mr. Cahan," pp. 5-13.

was "very much disturbed." He had received instructions to protest against "the deliberate attack on China and her national government." He asked if Cahan's opinions were in accord with those of the government and said the Chinese people were "in a state of great indignation."

It is doubtful if Skelton's discomfort was eased by the despatch he received from Marler on December 19. The latter expressed "his very deep satisfaction" with the address, which was entirely in accord with his own views. It had been "most favourably commented on in Japan." "Many of the foreign envoys here," said Marler, "have expressed the opinion that it was the best presentation and declaration made at the recent meeting of the League." However, Skelton had already expressed his dissatisfaction in a letter to Herridge on December 12. After commenting on the cabled summary as "probably somewhat expurgated," he described his meetings with the Chinese and Japanese representatives. On the latter he ironically commented, "I did not refuse to accept thinking we had better keep at least one friend for the time being." He would not be surprised to see an anti-Canadian boycott, presumably by Chinese sympathizers. It was "of course" not possible to disavow Cahan. Bennett, who was then in London, would discuss the matter with the offender when he arrived there. Unfortunately there is no published record of what must have been a lively conversation.

As Skelton had indicated, Riddell had been most discreet in responding to the department's request for a summary of the address. He had omitted, for example, such phrases as "more or less personal" and "as a lifelong friend of Japan." But on December 13 he described his own difficulties with Cahan. "I pointed out I did not see how he could overlook the instructions and that sometimes one had to suppress his own personal views." He then added: "Seeing as I was only a substitute delegate and a government official, I suppose Mr. Cahan felt I should not interfere in the matter." He also explained how he had tried to offset Norman Davis's criticism by claiming that "Cahan had made clear in his speech which part contained his personal opinions and which included his instructions." A careful examination of the text will not really support that excuse.

By December 24 Skelton had received the full text of the Cahan statement. In a personal and confidential letter to Riddell he went into the matter in painstaking detail. His overall view was that the address adhered more closely to the instructions than had been first thought. However, "the general effect is distinctly at variance." He was frank in his comments on the role of Simon: "The useful custom of consultation between Commonwealth delegates can hardly be continued if it takes the form of sub-

mission 'on approval' of the views of the Canadian government to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs." Then followed the most devastating dissection of a Canadian delegate's address that is on record in External Affairs. To what extent did Cahan depart from his instructions, either by the deletion of any important element or the addition of inconsistent material?

Skelton thought Cahan's initial blunder was to describe his opening remarks as "more or less personal." It was quite inconsistent with the duties of a delegate "in a purely-representative capacity." His criticism of the Chinese government's capacity to govern acquired "a peculiar and unfortunate significance" and the reference to the British action in 1927 was "gratuitous and unhelpful." The discussion of the Canadian view of sanctions was a breach of his instructions which declared discussion of them as "out of place at this time." Equally objectionable was the "mischievous" and "dangerous" suggestion about an advisory opinion from the World Court. To apply the qualifying limitation "except in two instances" to the endorsement of the factual accuracy of the Lytton Report was not in accord with instructions. To quote Matsuoka's description of Japan's role in Manchuria invited a conclusion "which seriously misrepresented the views of the Canadian government." Cahan had also erred in including in his address the warning about Japan's not taking up an irrevocable position which was intended as background material not meant for publication. As a result it "might have the effect of prejudicing the prospects of the policy our government has decided to pursue." The letter concluded with a mild reproach to Riddell at his lack of success in not securing "the element of continuity that is frequently lacking in our representations at League Assemblies."

It so happened this rebuke was withdrawn when Skelton received Riddell's explanatory letter of December 13. For some reason he had delayed forwarding his own and this enabled him to add a supplementary note on January 1 which praised Riddell for having handled a difficult situation "admirably" and said he could not have done more in the circumstances. It was the government's obligation to impress upon its representatives the importance of following their instructions and what had happened might prove valuable for the future in seeing that was done. Skelton confided that both Bennett and Perley had been "much disturbed," but could not repudiate a colleague and would try to "smooth it over" if the question was raised in Parliament. Riddell was also told that Herridge had reported upon "the great astonishment" created in Washington by Cahan's action. With an unexpected touch of irony

Skelton commented that "had they not known we Canadians are simple folk unversed in the ways of intrigue they would have thought we had double-crossed them." He was pleased that the Legation's good relations with the State Department had "prevented considerable irritation from developing."¹⁸

On the very day that Parliament re-convened it was necessary for the Prime Minister to apply the smoothing-over policy. In answer to Lapointe's inquiry as to whether Cahan's speech represented the government's policy Bennett claimed that many of the criticisms were "wholly unwarranted." He said that Cahan had made it "abundantly clear" in their meeting in London that "his speech did not as a whole in any sense depart from the instructions he had received." But Bennett then conceded that "if you just take odd sentences, you might arrive at conclusions entirely at variance with what was intended in the speech." Cahan was expected home shortly and he would make a further explanation.¹⁹

Soon after the League Assembly met to examine the report of its Committee of Nineteen upon the Lytton Report. Skelton, then in London on other business, regarded it as "a very thorough and adequate document." While there he learned that Canada "on account of its proximity and interest" might be asked to join the Committee. Both he and Ferguson felt that Bennett might wish to decline the invitation. Bennett thought otherwise. The invitation was a recognition of Canada's international position. "Refusal to serve . . . might be interpreted as an evasion of responsibility."

The day following, February 19, Riddell was told that he would represent Canada. He was authorized to describe the Committee's comments as "the unanimous and considered judgment of an informed and impartial committee jealous of preserving the peace of the world." It constituted "a solid basis for the peaceful development of the Far East." Canada hoped that "the parties to the dispute may eventually accept a regime embodying such recommendations and thereby reconcile their conflicting claims in so far as reconciliation is humanly possible." But Bennett, like Stimson, clung to the idealistic hope that "the public opinion of the world was the final and effective sanction for the preservation of international agreements." Needless to say, Riddell scrupulously followed his instructions. The report was adopted and Japan served notice of withdrawal from the League.

Together with the Netherlands, Canada was invited to join an enlarged

¹⁸ Docs. 5, pp. 319-29.

¹⁹ Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 30 January, p. 1664.

committee for negotiations. Riddell was authorized to attend meetings pro tem and further informed on March 2 that he was "to continue to attend meetings of this committee until further instructions are sent you."²⁰

The Prime Minister saw to it that his statement to the House coincided with Riddell's speech in Geneva. He reviewed the whole situation and quoted the instructions sent to Geneva. He remarked upon "the widespread interest in Canada" about developments and must have been gratified by the hearty manner in which both King and Woodsworth endorsed his remarks. The smoothing-over process had proved its utility.²¹

It was not until May 16 that Cahan delivered his apologia. It came when the session was drawing to a close and the estimates of the Department of External Affairs were being discussed. The minister delivered an audacious speech full of self-congratulations. He complained he had been "the victim of misrepresentation throughout the length and breadth of the land." His critics had never "thoroughly appreciated the purpose of the Lytton Commission Report." He had not been defending Japan, which "went to the very extreme and committed acts that are indefensible." He claimed to have said so in his address — a dubious assertion — and had no desire "to amend or modify" his views of December. His statement was presented "after consultation with other dominion members from time to time," another assertion that rests upon scanty documentation. His address had been listened to "with much intensity" and was "widely approved by eminent delegates from several of the leading states . . ." It was likewise approved "by the British delegation." Cahan argued that his statement had not adversely affected Canada's reputation and even asserted that it had "in part at least influenced the League's decision to increase the membership of the Committee of Nineteen and give Canada a permanent seat [*sic*]."

In an attempt to frighten his listeners Cahan suggested that he tried to offset the views of those "who were insistent that the League should resort to extreme measures." He told the M.P.s to ask themselves "as it was put to me" "how many thousands of troops, ten, twenty or twenty-five thousand would Canada be prepared to put in the Far East as part of an international force." His own reply was, "I did not believe that under the existing circumstances Canada would appropriate a single dollar towards maintaining a single company of troops for that purpose." If this episode actually happened — and Cahan said he was asked the question in private

²⁰ Docs. 5, pp. 332, 336-41.

²¹ Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 24 February, pp. 2421-31.

— it is odd, to say the least, that he made no mention of it in a report to Ottawa.

Regrettably, Cahan escaped virtually scot-free in the mini-debate that followed. Speaking for the embryo CCF, William Irvine “ventured to suggest” that the speech “did not represent the general opinion of the people of Canada.” The speaker then wandered off into a criticism of the League for not having done more. Canada should either ask that body to enforce the provisions of the Covenant or “throw up our hands as far as the League was concerned and have nothing more to do with it.” MacKenzie King spoke for the Liberals and was at his blandest and vaguest. Having expressed his “profound respect for my honourable friend’s ability and integrity,” he complained that the issue had been raised so late in the session and without proper notice. He would not therefore discuss it. Like his remarks in Geneva, Cahan’s statement spoke for itself. In his best Micawberish fashion King suggested that there might be a discussion in some future session “at a time when we trust the Sino-Japanese Crisis has concluded.”²²

It was left for time to bring about reversals of fortune. Understandably, Cahan never again played the part of diplomat and was to be defeated in the election of 1940. Riddell, the essence of discretion and good judgment in 1932, was in 1935 to blunder into much more serious trouble than his senior. King, who evaded decisive comment, was to be the head of a government which declared war on Japan before either Britain or the United States. And, after forty years, the story of how a stubborn and self-willed old man flouted his duty as a Canadian representative and startled and discomfited the Prime Minister and the Department of External Affairs is made available for the historian.

²² *Ibid.*, 16 May 1933, pp. 5051-69.