

The proposed rectification of the boundary in favour of France was a question which had caused some doubts in the minds of the New Zealand Government because, although the proposed changes were relatively small, an important principle was involved—namely, the principles of the Atlantic Charter regarding territorial aggrandizement and consultation of the wishes of the inhabitants. The French case was based in reality on strategical considerations—and it was clear that the new line gave France considerable strategic advantages—though claims of a historic and economic nature were the ones advanced before the Conference. France gave certain specific guarantees under Annex 2 of the treaty to secure electric power and water-supplies to Italy.

For Italy, Signor Saragat stated that the Italian Government would raise no objection to the transfer to France of the Little St. Bernard Pass, the valley of Bardonecchia, Mont Chaberton, and the Upper Tinee and the Vesubie Valleys, but they were worried about the Mont Cenis Plateau and the Upper Roya Valley. He explained that the Mont Cenis Plateau was entirely on the Italian side of the watershed and only 40 kilometers from Turin. There was also Italian property on the French side of the frontier, as there was French property on the Italian side. The Italians also stressed that it was dangerous that the large mass of water contained in the reservoir on the plateau of Mont Cenis should be detached from Italy, since any overflow would result in disastrous floods in Piedmont. As regards the Upper Roya Valley, the Italian objections were based on the fact that Italian was the universally spoken language, and this factor and the geographical one merited retention of the Briga-Tenda area in Italian territory. Moreover, the area was linked to Italy rather than to France by its economic ties, and, finally, the hydro-electric-power station in the Tenda area was of great importance to the economy of northern Italy. On the strategical side, the Italians argued that the cession of Mont Cenis and of the Upper Roya Valley would breach Italy's alpine frontier.

In answer to the Italian case the French delegation submitted a memorandum which outlined the economic and historic grounds on which the claims were based, but made little reference to their strategic significance. Most of the arguments advanced were repeated in the course of the debate, which is noted below.

The cases presented by the French and Italian delegations revealed considerable divergence upon basic facts, and the Australian representative accordingly proposed that a special Sub-Commission should be appointed to investigate and report upon the facts in this particular case. The New Zealand delegate took the view that the matter was of sufficient importance to be considered in the Commission as a whole, rather than in a Sub-Commission, and that such a method would moreover, save the time of the Conference.

Mr Mason expressed his concern that the territorial changes proposed by France should leave no physical barrier to military invasion of Italy. He asked if the French had considered whether the advantage