

they would gain from the change might not be counter-balanced by the feeling of insecurity it would rouse in the minds of Italians. He felt that the apprehensions in Italy created by the weakened frontier would have undesirable effects, and, as important changes in the direction of democracy had taken place in the structure of the Italian State, he considered it was desirable not to create fear and suspicion which might weaken the prestige of Italian democrats, in exchange for the small reinforcement of a French frontier, which, as the recent war had shown, was already secure.

The French delegate, in reply, emphasized that very little territory and very few people were involved, and he thought the difficulties could easily be solved bilaterally between France and Italy, though he admitted that strategically the frontier was favourable to France and would be more so if the proposed rectifications were made. He also reminded the Conference that the plebiscite of 1860 would have given this area to France, and that in any event the pastures on the plateau had continued to be owned by French people—though they had been subjected to constant pinpricks and to the expropriation of 3,065 out of 5,037 hectares of their land by the Fascist regime—and the people of Savoy were very anxious that the plateau should be joined to France.

Mr Mason maintained that it would be inconvenient for Italy to lose possession of the hydro-electric-power site, however she might be compensated and even if guarantees were given, and he again stressed that it seemed that the impairment of the natural alpine frontier of Italy by the session of the plateau to France might set up an unnecessary source of trouble in the future. He therefore asked for more information.

The French delegate added two more points—namely, that France wished to recover property expropriated by Italian Fascists, and, secondly, to recover the waters which rise in France and flow towards France. Mr Mason finally expressed doubt as to whether the change would secure tranquility, and he asked that the position be reconsidered. He also inquired whether the wishes of the inhabitants had been or were to be ascertained, in accordance with Article 2 of the Atlantic Charter.

He was supported by several delegations, who had similar doubts as to the wisdom of embittering Italy for such a trifling gain to France, with the result that when the clause was put to the vote it received 15 affirmative votes, but five States abstained, including New Zealand. The French did, however, make a number of concessions, notably in leaving to Italy the village of Olivetta—San Michele and in arranging that a joint Italo-French technical committee should ensure that the safety of the lower valley is not endangered by the Mont Cenis Plateau reservoir. These modifications of the draft treaty ensured that the relevant articles of the treaty (2, 6, 7, 8, and 9) were approved unanimously by the Conference.