

Canada and the Problem of Protection of Minorities in the League of Nations

Abstract:

The problem of minorities was one of the most acute throughout the existence of the League of Nations. The outcome of the First World War largely changed the map of Europe. New borders and old scores between the states only exacerbated national problems. While the Great Powers allowed their own interests to influence any possible solution of the issue, the Canadian approach to the protection of minorities is more interesting. In the first half of the twentieth century, Canada did not have any major influence on world politics. Canada could not dictate its terms to the member states of the League, and they, in turn, were reluctant to listen too much to the British Dominion, even when it tried to speak. However, the problem of the protection of minorities proved an important exception to the usual hierarchy. Elected in 1927 as a non-permanent member of the Council of the League, Canada itself had no direct interest in resolving national disputes in Europe. On this issue, however, Canada fought ardently and persistently. As a multicultural state, Canada felt strongly the need to protect the rights of national minorities. Its voice was heard and, as a result, the League of Nations changed its approach to the national minority dispute procedure, making the process more open to all parties. This article will consider how Canada, which had no serious foreign policy weight, managed to make progress in such a complex issue as the protection of the rights of national minorities in Europe.

Keywords: *League of Nations, Europe, national minorities, Canada, Madrid Procedure.*