

The Journal of Commerce

Vol. XLIII., No. 9

MONTREAL, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1917

Price, 10 Cents

The Journal of Commerce

Devoted to
CANADIAN INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND
FINANCE.

Published every Tuesday Morning by
The Journal of Commerce Publishing Company,
Limited.

Head Office: 35-45 St. Alexander Street, Montreal.
Telephone: Main 2662.
Toronto Office: 263 Adelaide St. West, Toronto.
Telephone: Adelaide 917.

HON. W. S. FIELDING,
President and Editor-in-Chief.

Subscription price, \$3.00 a year.
Advertising rates on application.

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Special Articles

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Dominion War Bonds with Interest Payable at New York.

By H. M. P. Eckhardt.

Conditions in the West.

By E. Cora Hind.

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The Business of the Conference

THE anticipation that the Imperial Conference, called undoubtedly as a compliment to the Overseas Dominions in acknowledgment of their part in the war, might easily prove an embarrassment to the Imperial Government is already being realized. That the Conference was called without a very clear idea on the part of its official promoters as to what its business was to be, seems more evident from day to day. As the time approaches for its meeting, enquiry as to its programme naturally becomes frequent. The ordinary Imperial Conference, meeting once in four or five years, is avowedly a meeting, not to promote any particular measure, but to allow general friendly consultation among the statesmen of the Mother Country and Dominions. For such a Conference a programme in advance is not necessary. The obvious purpose is to allow those present to bring forward any matter that they may feel is of interest to the welfare of the Empire. But the meeting about to be held, as the official invitation very clearly stated, is not of that character. It is a special Conference, different from the other, to afford the representatives of the Overseas Dominions an opportunity to be heard in relation to the war, but what are the particular subjects that they are expected to consider the Imperial authorities now frankly admit they do not know.

Mr. Lloyd George, in a press interview a month ago, while not specifying any subjects for the Conference, made the general statement that "nothing affecting the Dominions, the conduct of the war, or the negotiations for peace will be excluded from its purview." Having given this free for all invitation to the delegates, one would have supposed that the British Government would have awaited the assembling of the Conference, and allowed the representatives of the Overseas Dominions to determine for themselves what questions, in their opinion, "affected the Dominions". It is evident, however, that the prospect of allowing the Dominions men to do that created uneasiness, and that it was deemed necessary to modify the broad statement of the Prime Minister.

The enthusiasts in England who have for several years been advocating such a Conference, under the impression that the Dominions were demanding a re-organization of their relations with the Mother Country, very naturally assumed that questions of that class would engage the attention of the Conference, and were proceeding to air their views as to how the Empire might advantageously be remade. Alarmed, apparently, by this widely held expectation, Lord Curzon hurriedly raised a keep-off-the-grass sign. Speaking au-

thoritatively, as the Government's representative in the House of Lords, Earl Curzon stated very emphatically that the Conference would not take up any question of the re-organization of the Empire.

With that large class of questions excluded, the field of the Conference's work was very materially narrowed. Then some of those who had expected so much from the Conference began to look for other topics that they thought must surely occupy the attention of the meeting. One set seized upon the question of Home Rule for Ireland, suspended by the war situation, as one which the Conference would of course consider. The urgency of some settlement of the Irish question was generally recognized. Recent efforts by British statesmen to find a solution of the old problem had sadly failed. Some fresh minds were needed to consider and deal with it. The Dominions were much interested in it, as they had frequently shown by the action of their Parliaments. Here was a question in which the co-operation of British and Colonial representatives must surely prove valuable. A happy adjustment of the Irish troubles was one good thing, at least, that the Conference might hope to produce. So wide was this impression of the business of the Conference that an Irish member asked a question about it in the House of Commons last week, whereupon Mr. Bonar Law promptly replied that the Conference would not be permitted to touch the Irish question. "The subjects," he said, "which were to be considered cannot finally be settled until after the arrival of the overseas representatives, but nevertheless the decision in any question concerning administration of the United Kingdom could obviously only be taken up by the Imperial Parliament." "The Dominions," Mr. Law continued, "he was sure would not wish to discuss anything that would add to the difficulties of the war."

The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Walter Long, it will be remembered, doubtless with the Conference in his mind, lately proclaimed that the captured German colonies would be retained by Great Britain, whereupon he was reminded by an influential journal that the question of the distribution of the booty of war was one to be dealt with by the Allies, and not by Britain alone.

With the question of the relations between the Mother Country and the Dominions, the question of Home Rule for Ireland, and the question of the disposal of the captured German colonies all removed from the consideration of the Conference, the field of work for the meeting seems very limited. That the Conference is to have any real work in relation to the prosecution of the war is not to be expected. The Mother Country and the Dominions have pledged themselves to each other and to the Allies that they will employ their full resources in winning victory. More they cannot do at a table in London. As to the