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First Imperial Press Conference.

(By Sir Harry Brittain, K.B.E., M.P., in Mayfair.)

"It is doubtful whether any gathering within the Empire, official or unofficial, has ever been more conducive to good understanding and to sound, practical results." This was the verdict of a Government Blue Book (an austere organ which seldom enthuses upon unofficial events), after the completion of the First Imperial Press Conference in 1909.

The idea of convening a congress of the editors in chief of the great newspapers of the Empire occurred to me during a visit to Canada in the year 1907, at the back of my mind being the conviction that such a gathering would be the means of dispelling many a misunderstanding between our scattered nations, and be the most effective method to bring home to millions of scattered Britons what were the Empire's potentialities, needs and dangers. I confided my scheme to my old friend Earl Grey (then Governor General), who proved to be an enthusiastic supporter. Immediately upon my return to London, I discussed the idea with the leaders of the British Press, and it was decided to go ahead.

A Labor of Love.

But the idea was a new one; unexpected difficulties cropped up and two years hard labor was before me. The task, however, was an invigorating one and entirely a labor of love, and I shall never forget the kindness and ever ready help of my good friends of the British Press and particularly of those who throughout the months of preparation spared neither time nor effort in ensuring success; the powerful aid of such men as Lord Burnham, Lord Northcliffe, Sir Arthur Pearson, Robert Donald, Kennedy Jones and H. A. Gwynne (to mention but a few), was a full insurance that our objects would be achieved. The invitations were in due course despatched, the editors from the Dominion, Crown Colonies and India being bidden as our guests from the time they left their homes until the date of their return.

In this short article it is impossible to deal even in outline with all the events crowded into those eight

memorable weeks. The first welcome afforded our guests was at the hands of 700 journalists of the old land, at which Lord Rosebery made what was perhaps the most remarkable of all his splendid efforts of oratory. In the great room of the Foreign Office our visitors were enabled to meet practically every leading British statesman for the purpose of discussing one momentous topic after another.

Received by Royalty.

Their Majesties the King and Queen (then Prince and Princess of Wales), invited the delegates to a garden party at Marlborough House, where each member learnt at first hand how intimate was the knowledge of the Empire possessed by his Royal host. One little incident at that delightful gathering I shall not forget. After the presentation of the delegates and their wives to the number of about 100—naturally merged into the general gathering. A few minutes later I was sent for by His Royal Highness, who informed me that a message had just arrived from Buckingham Palace to say that King Edward, accompanied by Queen Alexandra, was on his way to Marlborough House and had graciously expressed a wish to have the delegates presented to him individually! As there were at least 500 people present, the garden large, the tents numerous and the ozone, which instantly reaches the weather warm, my task was not an easy one, particularly as I had only seen the majority of our visitors for the first time on the previous day. But the command was fulfilled, and the visitors duly marshalled with about fifteen seconds to spare, and I need not emphasize the pleasure which this unexpected audience gave our guests; likewise shall I always treasure a very kindly message which I received afterwards from King George upon the successful results of my short but strenuous search.

Reviewed by Civilians.

Outstanding features of the visit were the review of the Fleet at Spithead and of the Army—that wonderful "contemptible Little Army"—at Aldershot. It was, I believe, the first time in history upon which the sea and land forces of any great Power has ever been reviewed by civilians—but how fruitful in re-

sults was the effect of those reviews following the Conferences upon Imperial Defence.

Much happened in the fateful years between 1909 and 1914, and many a letter received from the Dominions after the outbreak of war has been to me an ample recompense for the two years devoted to the organization of the first gathering of these missionaries of Empire.

Some Results.

The results of the first Imperial Press Conference were twofold—direct and indirect. Of the former one immediate result was the reduction of Press cable rates to practically every part of the Empire; what this has meant from the point of view of a clearer understanding and a closer co-operation within the Empire it is unnecessary to emphasize. Another direct result was the formation of a permanent body to carry on the work begun at the Conference. This body is the Empire Press Union; under the Presidency of one of the most able, experienced and popular newspaper men of our day, Lord Burnham, the activities of the Union have proved of the greatest benefit to the Empire's Press.

Perhaps the indirect results of the Conference, though harder to tabulate, were by far the most important. We brought to the Home-land men whose life's work was to mould public opinion in every section of the Empire. We did our best to show these men something of Great Britain as she really is, from the inside. They reviewed her powerful and might, they saw her peaceful countryside, and we did not hide from them the poverty and squalor to be found in her great cities. They met our leading statesmen from whom they learnt of the difficulties we have to contend against as the pivot of the Empire. Their meetings with our leading newspapermen were of enormous benefit to both, and led to innumerable and lasting friendships which have done much to bind together the Empire's Press. They voiced the sentiments of empire unity and equality as speaking for the great mass of the people in a manner in which they had never been voiced before, and lastly, on their return to their distant homes they carried back this first-hand knowledge and wider understanding which they have been able to set forth for the benefit of their millions of readers in many tongues throughout the Seven Seas.

Landmarks in History.

As Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, remarked only a few days ago, these conferences are likely to be landmarks in history; at this first gathering "great Imperial questions were thoroughly discussed, and a community of ideas established, to which he attributed in a great degree the marvellous way in which the Empire pulled together when the hour of trial came." And now we look forward to the Second Press Conference, which is to be held in Canada during the present year. Canada, the land of hospitality, a land where the art of organization has been perfected, in preparing a magnificent welcome for a veritable Parliament of the Press. My colleagues upon the Empire Press Union, of which I sincerely appreciate the privilege of being an Honorary Member—did me the honor of asking me to act as Chairman of the Imperial Press Conference Sub-committee, for at the wish of our hosts the Central Branch of the Empire Press Union is dealing with invitations and general arrangements for the Homeland and the rest of the Empire.

Civic Commission.

WEEKLY MEETING.

The Weekly meeting of the Municipal Commission was held on Thursday, July 29th. The Chairman and all the Commissioners were present.

A letter was read from the Colonial Secretary intimating that the Executive Government would take up the question of free entry for all the materials for house-building.

In connection with the housing scheme, the Commission will meet Saturday to decide whether they shall continue building or not.

A letter was read from the president of the Gas Company, with a statement of the Company's affairs which was being presented to the Government by the Company. They asked the Commission's co-operation and relief. The Commission's last decision on the matter of assisting the Company in halving the Coal Duties will be sent to the Government, the payment then to take the form of a payment for the franchise.

The Motor Association, through their Secretary, Mr. Outerbridge, drew attention to the condition of the railroad track on the Road leading from Water Street to the South Side, and Street railway tracks leading from Water Street to the car barns. Ordered he be informed, the Board has been continually bringing this matter to the notice of the Reid Co. The Company are called upon to keep the tracks level with the road and in spite of the Commission's representations nothing has been done.

W. A. McKay wrote on behalf of the merchants of Water St. who con-

tributed to a fund for the operation of the electric street sprinkler. He asked permission to obtain sufficient water for this purpose for the season only. Ordered Mr. McKay be informed there is no necessity for this action at present. The City will have a new sprinkler in a few days.

Jas. Murdoch on behalf of W. E. Murdoch, submitted a plan of bungalow for approval, to be erected on Sudbury Street. Provided he pays for pipe extension the plan will be passed. Decided to instruct the City Engineer to have the proposed street, west of Leslie, developed.

The following plans of houses were approved: Chas. Hammond, Quidi Vidi Road, outhouse; J. Colish, LeMarchant Road, dwelling; Mr. Woodland, Franklin Avenue, grocery store; Robert Avery, Franklin Avenue, dwelling; Jas. Glynn, Franklin Avenue, dwelling, provided water and sewerage removed by June 1st next. Victoria Street. In the case of Mrs. A. Mercer's application she cannot build. Meantime, an estimate of the cost of laying pipes in McKay Street will be secured. Frederick Crocker cannot be permitted to build as requested on South Side. H. S. Ford asked for information as to water and sewerage, Freshwater Road. The Commission cannot do any extension for this locality for the present.

Wm. James applied for water and sewerage under the Small Homes' Act. Referred to the Secretary for enquiry. Same order was made respecting the application of John McLeod.

Geo. Knowling can place a temporary covering over a shed for coal, with the understanding he is to have same removed by June 1st next.

Private J. Ludlow applied for the position as driver on the new motor sprinkler. Ordered he be informed the position is filled.

W. Williams requested permission to install a 1-4 h.p. motor in his shop, 41 Young Street. Referred to the City Engineer. The same order was made respecting the application of Mr. Chambers for a crossing of drains, Leslie Street.

Ordered the offer of John Angel, as read by the City Engineer, to repair steam roller be accepted.

A number of tenders were received for coal for city purposes. As three of the tenders were equal in amount, the quantity will be divided amongst them.

The weekly report of the City Engineer, which embraced repairs to Renie's Bridge, grading several streets, repairs to old "10" main, New Gower Street, and work generally in water and sewer departments, was read.

Weekly reports of the Plumbing Inspector and Health Officer were read. The meeting then adjourned.

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To fit girls up to 14 years. These are in the most pleasing shapes and styles. Assorted Prices.

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