

The Washington Negotiations

Washington, Nov. 16.—The Behring Sea meeting, in which representatives of Great Britain and the United States have participated, came to a close to-night, the seal experts making a unanimous report concerning the condition of the seal herds, and the diplomatic representatives of the respective governments reaching an understanding by which they hope at a later day to effect a final adjustment, not only of the Behring Sea question, but of other pending border controversies. For the present, however, no final action was taken as to the suspension of pelagic sealing. The Canadians urged that other questions be embraced in any plan of settlement and suggested an international commission to accomplish this end. This proposition was fully discussed and an agreement reached that the Canadian officials would put their views in writing after returning to Ottawa, and submit them to the authorities here. All parties concerned say that the outlook is favorable to a satisfactory adjustment. The unanimous agreement of the experts brings the governments together for the first time on all the facts relating to the seals.

This agreement was reached after painstaking comparison of notes, and the results were announced in an official statement made public by General Foster, as follows: "The delegates to the fur seal conference have agreed unanimously on certain propositions touching the fur seal herd of Behring Sea. The report contains sixteen propositions, which are briefly epitomized as follows: "That the Pribyloff herd has declined in numbers from 1884 to 1897; that the number was formerly three to five times that which now exists; that the death rate among pups is great, not more than one-half to one-third surviving to the age of three years; that the number of breeding females in 1896 and 1897 was between 100,000 and 150,000; that the decrease from 1896 to 1897 was notable, though its extent could not be definitely determined; that land killing of males as now practised, does no harm to the herds; that the pelagic sealing involves indiscriminate killing; that the catch at sea contains a marked excess of females; that the killing of males on land is the cause of this; that among the females killed are not only those both nursing and pregnant, but also many who are immature or who have already lost their pups; that the fur seal being polygamous, a large number of males may be killed with impunity; that females cannot be killed in similar numbers without checking the increase of the herd or bringing about an actual decline, that a small number of females, less than the annual increment of breeders, might be taken without producing actual decrease; that excessive pelagic sealing has led to a reduction in the herd; that pelagic sealing has of late fallen off in greater ratio than the herd has, thus producing a tendency toward equilibrium in numbers; that in estimating the future conditions of the herd, must be taken into consideration the number of surviving pups caused by the pelagic catches of 1894-95; that the herd is not in danger of actual extermination so long as its haunts on land are protected and the protected zone is maintained; that both land and sea killing now yields an inconsiderable profit either to the lesser or to the pelagic sealers themselves."

The delegates signing the agreement are as follows: Charles Sumner Hamlin, David Starr Jordan, D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, James Melville Macoun.

Following the agreement of the experts the diplomatic officials assembled at General Foster's house to discuss the larger question of putting an end to pelagic sealing and of settling other border controversies. Owing to the illness of Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British government was represented by the first secretary of the British embassy, Mr. Adam. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir Louis Davies were present in behalf of Canada. General Foster's powers had been materially enlarged since the coming of the Canadian officials, for as a result of a long and friendly talk between Sir Wilfrid and Secretary Sherman, the latter had written to the Canadian premier stating that the president has empowered General Foster to treat on the various border questions, which Sir Wilfrid had called to the attention of Mr. Sherman and with the co-operation of the British government to conclude treaties covering these subjects. This gave the meeting a broad significance. It began at 4 p. m., and lasted until 7. The entire range of border affairs was discussed. Primarily the purpose of the meeting was to secure an agreement on Behring Sea. The Canadians made it clear, however, that they wished any plan of settlement to take a broader scope than the one subject of Behring Sea, and to embrace the many sources of friction along the border. The plan of an international commission was discussed at great length. The Canadians felt that the commission afforded the best means of reconciling all differences, and of opening the way to reciprocity. The discussion was most friendly throughout, and no sharp differences were allowed to crop out. It was felt however, that the plan of a commission was too large a question for immediate determination. A final understanding was reached, therefore, that the Canadian propositions should be reduced to writing as a basis for further negotiations.

This closed the conference, and the officials said their farewells expressing satisfaction at the cordial feeling which had characterized the meetings of the last ten days. Sir Wilfrid and Sir Louis leave to-morrow morning for Ottawa.

Land in the Rockies.

Mr. L. A. Hamilton, land commissioner of the Canadian Pacific railway, returned Tuesday from a six weeks' trip to the Kootenay country. The C. P. R. land department has recently taken over the land interests of the Columbia and Kootenay railway, some 200,000 acres, and also of the British Columbia Southern and Crow's Nest Pass railway, the provincial land grant to this road being 20,000 acres a mile. All these lands are in the east and west Kootenay and as Mr. Hamilton described them in the morning to a Free Press representative:

"The lands we have taken over may be divided into three classes. 1st. The agricultural lands capable of being cultivated, and the hay meadows; 2nd the bench lands capable of being irrigated; 3rd, the pasture lands for grazing purposes. None of these lands have been placed on the market and

they also include fine coal and timber property. The bench grass lands are quite numerous and raise the finest beef in the world. All these lands will be inspected, looked over and if possible placed on the market next summer.

"I daresay you are aware," continued Mr. Hamilton, "that people are continually inquiring for lands in a milder climate where fruit may be raised, and we can in the near future direct their attention to these new locations. Oats and hay can be raised there, and there is now a big local demand; hay being worth \$20 to \$25 a ton, and oats 85 cents to \$1 a bushel. I saw on one farm a crop of 6,000 bushels; this was near Cranbrook."

"What direction did your tour take?"

"I went from Nelson and Kootenay Lake, to the point where the Crow's Nest line strikes the lake. There was a party of us including the manager of construction, Mr. Haney, and we went over the line of the railway by pack and saddle horse. It occupied eight days."

"Did any particular district impress you more than another?"

"Well for timber and agricultural lands. I think the valley of the Elk river on the other side of the mountains, cannot be beaten."

"Did you locate any townsites along the new line of railway?"

"No, I was merely looking over the ground. There will, however, be two or three important towns in East Kootenay—at Moyle Lake, where there are valuable mines; at Cranbrook, 12 miles west of the Kootenay river, and in the vicinity of the coal mines of the British Columbia Southern, in Crow's Nest Pass, also at the crossing of the Kootenay river. Surveyors are now out, and as soon as the manager of construction decides, these sites will be surveyed and placed on the market."

"How are the centres of the mining districts progressing?"

"Nelson is flourishing, and the big smelter is working night and day all the week. Many fine buildings are going up. Rossland seems to have picked up considerably, and a better feeling prevails than during my visit of a few months ago."

Hudson Bay.

Ottawa, Nov. 14.—Mr. James Fisher, M. L. A., who accompanied the expedition to Hudson's Bay this year as a representative of the Manitoba government, was in the city yesterday for a couple of hours on his way west. Mr. Fisher is well satisfied with the result of this year's expedition, and will present a full report to Mr. Greenway. His letters to the Free Press have given a general outline of the trip. He says that when the Diana left Hudson's Straits on October 30, the ice was just beginning to form in the harbors, but there was still open water, and this they had had since July 10. From Mr. Fisher's own knowledge then there was continuous navigation for sixteen weeks, and possibly longer. Mr. Fisher says some authorities express the opinion that this season may have been an exceptional one in that region, and that possibly in other years navigation would not be possible for such a length of time.