

ADDRESS GIVEN BY MR. LIONEL CURTIS AT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON
IN SAN FRANCISCO, AUGUST 9, 1927.

When the war was over some of us in London asked ourselves what we could do to prevent such a terrible thing from happening again. To that end we created a body, where men in politics, journalism, business, officials and professors could meet to study the matter. Europe, of course we assumed, was the danger point. But as time passed we realized that the scene was shifting. In the far East were gathered clouds ~~back~~ with a storm which if it broke might not be limited to that hemisphere.

Presently we received your invitation to take part in the conference from which we are now returning. The challenge was one difficult to meet. It was hard to raise the money but harder still to find people of the requisite capacity who could spare two or three months of their time. Unless we could get such people to go it was better to send no one at all.

So we took counsel with various sections of our members, and especially the business men. Now before we go further I have something to say with regard to the part which business men play in our organization.

In the Royal Institute of International Affairs one of the discoveries we have made is that bankers and men who trade with countries abroad acquire a fund of information the political value of which they themselves do not realise. Or rather, they only realise it when they come to discuss it with people accustomed to handle political questions.

On receiving your invitation we consulted our business men, and without hesitation they urged us to accept it. They generously offered to help us with the cost and advised that the party sent should include some men of affairs. So months before the party was due to start we adopted the same plan as your group in America, which was also followed by our friends in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. We established a panel of all the suitable persons who thought that they might be able to come with us. We included in the panel members from all the political parties, retired officials, professors and men of affairs. When the time came to start the only interest not represented was business. In varying degrees the groups from the other countries had the same experience; and the reason is obvious. More than any other class, men in a large way of business are subject to sudden claims on their time. This conference was no exception to the rule. Experience shows that business men billed to attend conferences oftener than not fail to get there. In result, the proceedings are left to philanthropists, journalists and professors.

I will try to give you my own impression of this conference. Personally, I learned more of Pacific questions than I had gathered in the whole of the rest of my life. I am further convinced that the groups are returning to their several countries with ~~views~~ not one view, but with different and perhaps opposite views, that in these countries will take root downwards and bear fruit upwards with all the propagating power of seeds. In Canada billions of bushels were grown from a single grain. A sound opinion is of all things the most vital. Once upon a time there was only one man in the world who believed that the earth moved and went round the sun. Today every school child knows that Copernicus was right. Truth like gold looks after its own circulation when once it is properly mined and minted.