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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1919.

Special Articles

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By E. CORA HIND.

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Conference Troubles-- The Big Five

THE so-called direct representation of the Dominions at the Peace Conference in Paris does not seem to have been a success in the only matter of large importance in which the Dominions are exceptionally concerned. Canada, as we have before remarked, while of course deeply interested in the war, and in all world affairs, has not appeared to have any special interest in the peace negotiations — any interest that is not common to the Empire at large. Australia, New Zealand and South Africa are particularly interested in the question of the disposal of the colonies captured from Germany, and it seems that on this question the claims of those Dominions have failed to obtain the approval of the Conference.

There is considerable nonsense in the inspired cablegrams to Canada as to the status of the Dominions and the part they are taking at the Conference. What appears to be the fact is that, while for appearance sake the representatives of the Dominions and the smaller nations are admitted to some of the meetings, the real business is directed and fully controlled by what we may call the Big Five, the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, the United States and Japan. The terms of some recent official announcements are suggestive. Here is a passage from the official report of the proceedings of January 27:

“The president of the United States, the prime ministers and foreign ministers of the United States, the British Empire, France and Italy and the representatives of Japan held two meetings to-day—the first from 11 a.m. until 12.30, and the second from 4 to 6.30 p.m.

“An exchange of views took place on the German colonies in the far east and the Pacific and those in Africa.

“The representatives of the Dominions were present at these two sessions and representatives of China at that in the morning, and the Marquis Salvago (Italy) at that in the afternoon.”

In the official report of January 30 we read:

“The president of the United States, the prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs of the allied and associated power, as well as the Japanese representatives, to-day held two meetings at the Quai d'Orsay,

the first from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., and the second from 3.30 to 6 p.m.

“The exchange of views continued on the German colonies in the Pacific and in Africa, in the presence of the representatives of the Dominions and of M. Simon, French minister of the colonies, and of the Marquis Salvo Raggi (Italy).”

These official statements give a view of the position of the Dominions that is hardly in accord with some of the unofficial reports that have been published here. It is the Big Five that forms the court, that meets to consider important matters. The representatives of the smaller nations and the Dominions are received and heard in cases in which they are particularly interested. It is noteworthy, too, that an official statement issued on Friday at Washington, purporting to contain a full list of the personnel of the Conference, makes no mention of any representative of the Dominions. Whether the kind of Dominions' representation that is thus disclosed was worth struggling for may be questioned. That it has accomplished nothing for the Dominions on the question of the conquered German colonies is unpleasantly evident.

The Conference—that is the Big Five—according to latest reports has agreed to a proposal made by President Wilson that the captured German colonies shall be internationalized, that they shall form a sort of No Man's Land, to be governed by some kind of authority to be appointed by the contemplated League of Nations. This result is deeply disappointing to Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Their troops had a large part in the capture of the colonies in question. The expectation that the conquered territories would be handed over to the Dominions named, or that at all events they would be made a part of the British Empire, has been entertained generally in the Dominions. Canada, it is safe to say, sympathized with the sister Dominions in this respect. It appears, however, that Britain has been outvoted by the others of the Big Five and has had to accept the decision of the majority.

It is an unpleasant situation, which will naturally cause much disappointment and discontent in the several Dominions concerned. Reports from Australia indicate that there is a disposition to blame the British Government for this result. Similar ground is taken by several influential London journals. This, however, does not seem to be warranted. The