International Council of Women.

Conference on the Prevention of the Causes of War

HELD AT THE

British Empire Exhibition Wembley

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Abridged Report.

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Conference on the Prevention of the Causes of War.

Chairman : THE MARCHIONESS OF ABERDEEN AND TEMAIR.

Delegate's Report.

It is always difficult to compress the report of a full and important Conference into a short paper, and in the present case it is especially so, for the ground covered was so wide and the level of the speaking so high that anything less than a full report cannot hope to do anything like justice to either the manner or the matter of the meetings. All I can do is to try and give some idea of the general atmosphere and provoke the desire to get the full report which is to be published, in order to read the addresses verbatim.

In her opening remarks the chairman said that women were often accused of being backward in helping on the cause of Peace. This was probably due largely to a sense of helplessness. The Conference, however, suggested many ways in which women *can* help, and as the meetings progressed it was interesting to notice the reiterated emphasis upon the same points brough out in different ways by the various speakers, a reiteration which did much to add to the sense of that unity of conception which must underlie all great movements if they are to be successful, and which is indeed one of the tests of greatness.

The Conference opened appropriately with a discussion on methods of education. Alderman Sainsbury, of the National Union of Teachers, restated the axiom that in the beginning a certain attitude of mind towards the whole question of peace must be implanted in the children. There ought to be an international code of morality in regard to it which should be accepted by all, and this should be based on the study of history and geography. Present day history books should be re-written with less emphasis placed on the glory of war and the records of battles, and more on the side of its attendant horrors and the advantages of peaceful development. Nations must be placed in an international setting so that their interdependence would become apparent and a different standard of justice necessarily emerge, based on an attitude of good-will and a realisation that spiritual values must always count and that patriotism must be brought into line with this wider vision.

Thus in the very beginning one of the outstanding notes of the

Conference was struck. Later in the session the Bishop of Oxford, speaking on the subject of referring all disputes to arbitration or conciliation, stated that he had studied 190 cases in which arbitration had been resorted to instead of war ; and if this were possible in some cases, why not in all? It was beside the mark to urge that all those instances had been over trivial matters. If the immediate causes of war were studied they would usually be found to be just as trivial ; but in some of the cases the cause of the dispute had been serious. As an outstanding example he took the trouble between England and America over what was known as the " Alabama Claim." At some points in that controversy it seemed as though the relations between the two countries were so strained that war were inevitable, but at last it was decided to resort to arbitration. In the result the judgment went against England and the English paid up all that was asked of them. The receipt given by the U.S.A. was one of the most interesting documents in the Foreign Office, and as a result of that amicable settlement, England and America had lived peacefully and securely as neighbours ever since.

Another point which was emphasised at intervals throughout the sessions was the need for the interchange of teachers and also of students. Dr. Nitobe, in his address on the "Interchange of Students and Teachers between different Countries," pointed out both some of the drawbacks and some of the advantages. A student, said Dr. Nitobe,—if you rule out those who are merely athletes,—is one who is in search of knowledge, and he should be a nomad ; one who seeks for wisdom in all the corners of the earth. This "wanderlust" spirit in the true student has always been recognised, and it should be organised and encouraged. At present the chief disadvantages that the would-be wanderer laboured under were (1) the difficulty and expense of travel ; (2) the question of passports ; (3) the expenses of living in a foreign country ; (4) the language difficulty and the lack of friends, the strangeness of alien customs and manners and the present difficulty caused by the certificates and the granting of degrees, all which points he said were now recognised as deterrents and were being dealt with by the League of Nations and other authorities which were trying to overcome them. The advantages on the other hand were,—the greater choice in the matter of teachers, the opportunity to compare the atmospheres of the various universities, and the acquirement of a foreign language. The opportunity also to study various manners, customs and mentality, and so achieve that tolerance which is willing to give liberty as well as to claim it ; the enlarged human interest, the fact that a student represents his race and helps as well as gains by carrying an alien culture to the people with whom he lives, and finally there is the delight in one's own country when one returns. "For me," said Dr. Nitobe, "when I return to Japan I always feel how lovely everything is and see an even more etherial beauty in the cherries."

Following him, Dr. Winifred Cullis, the chairman of the International Relations Committee of the British Federation of University Women, explained that the chief difficulty in the interchange of students was now the finance, and every effort was being made to

overcome that. She considered that students sent abroad should be very carefully chosen and should be those who would be a credit to their nation.

Mr. Allen explained that in connection with the L.C.C. a scheme for exchanging teachers had been established, and about fifty a year were able to take advantage of it ; they were pressing for legislation which would enable service abroad to count in the matter of degrees and length of service.

Later on in the Conference Miss Ruth Rouse again illustrated the benefit which arose from such exchange by telling the story of an exchanged student who at first disliked his new companions, but in the end formed such a close friendship with them that he was able to bring influence to bear through the Parliament of his own country, which was largely instrumental in preventing a war into which the two nations threatened to plunge.

The somewhat ambiguous capitation " The Intellectual Co-operation between Nations " was charmingly dealt with by Mr. Sen. He began by stating that Sanskrit was the basis of the Indian languages just as Greek and Latin were basic in Europe, and that co-operation already existed and was in the very nature of things inevitable. The world's greatest intellects were international. Kalidasa, Capilla, Shakespeare, Goethe, etc., benefited every nation and belonged to every race, and any culture which tried to keep itself too intensely national would perish. He felt that many conferences should be arranged, many visits paid and exchanged. It would be found that man was fundamentally the same ; culture was humanity's birthright—out of ignorance came jealousy, dislike and misunderstanding—and only by intellectual co-operation can peace and happiness come to mankind. Dr. Nitobe dealt with the same subject at one of the public meetings later on.

On Wednesday, May 7th, the session was opened by Lady Astor, who, after saying in a characteristic phrase that she was afraid that she was going to make "a wet subject rather dry," proceeded to give a number of statistics regarding the sale and distribution of liquor, with special reference to the tragedy of the backward races, who in some cases, thought that the way to make themselves equal to the white man was to drink as the white man drank, with only too appalling and self-evident results ; and she put forward a strong plea for investigation and legislation to regulate the sale of intoxicants to natives in newly developing territory. She was followed by Miss Agnes Slack, Hon. Sec. of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union, who emphasised the same point by saying that one of the native Indian Princes had once told her that although their native religion enjoined temperance it was becoming increasingly difficult to enforce it. Miss Slack surveyed the temperance work which is being done in various parts of the world, with special reference to Europe, India and China, where the work is very active, and she mentioned that 50 million pounds worth of pure alcohol had been drunk in Great Britain last year. In connection with this subject there was an interesting interlude. Miss Furuhjelm, of Finland (whom Lady Aberdeen introduced as "the first woman Member of

Parliament in the World") rose, and in a very earnest little speech, set forth the evils of prohibition as she had found them in Finland. She stated that is was because she was a temperance lover that she deprecated prohibition. That because there was the law for complete prohibition, the temperance work in Finland had ceased, and that unfortunately it was still necessary. That there was a great deal of smuggling, and secret instead of open drinking, and that the moral tone among the people was lower in consequence as the smuggled liquor was illegally sold.

Miss Slack replied by stating that during a recent tour in Finland she had been told by doctors, teachers, lawyers, the police, etc., that the law had been most beneficial, that the school children had been better dressed, the prisons emptier, and so on ; to which Miss Furuhjelm responded that in *many* countries the working-class children had been better dressed since the war as the result of improved industrial conditions, and that as the information had been mainly given by officials, whose duty it is to say that state regulations are working well, it was probably somewhat biassed and not altogether reliable.

The following day Fru Anna Backer took another opportunity to say a few words on the same lines. The system of prohibition which had been introduced into Norway during the war had been allowed to remain, and she felt that it had been a mistake. She said that as in Finland, it was impossible to watch the whole of the coast line, that liquor was distilled, smuggled in and illegally sold, and that the young people were thus encouraged to defy the laws of the country and drink in secret. Cases had even been known where children had gone drunk to school. Like Miss Furuhjelm, she spoke with great seriousness, and begged the temperance workers to consider the position very earnestly. She urged all to work for temperance, but not to go in for prohibition. An American, speaking later again, said that the opinion in America was still divided on the subject.

Various speakers dealt with the Health Section of the Conference. Baroness Mannerheim, President of the International Council of Nurses, said that the Council had almost died out during the war, but is going ahead again now, and the older and better organised nations are helping to train and organise the nursing in the younger and less well equipped countries. Dr. René Sand, Secretary General, League of Red Cross Societies, spoke of the value of the international work that awakens a health conscience. Twenty-eight States sent representatives to the Conference for combatting epidemics in 1922, and owing to the improved international methods of hygiene, great progress had been made in establishing healthier conditions, as one result of which he thought we should all live to see the last case of yellow fever.

Mrs. Nevil Rolfe gave some account of the progress made by the N.C.C.V.D. She considered that commercialised vice is the chief cause of the traffic in women. There are still those who think that regularised prostitution is the best way of dealing with venereal disease, but on scientific and medical authority it has been proved

that groups of segregated prostitutes are a menace, and not a protection to the community, and statistics have led in many cases to the abolition of regularised prostitution. She stated, however, that in some of the outlying parts of the Empire, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, the British Empire is in danger of taking retrograde steps, for vice is regularised and practised in such far away outposts. This she felt to be partly due to the apathy of the women who are out there, an apathy which is not altogether their fault, as they are not kept informed of the facts. Regulation of prostitution is of NO value, she reiterated, as a public health protection ; what is needed is an equal moral standard, and, in the ports the provision for seamen—ashore perhaps for one night, with no friends and nowhere to go—of decent sleeping accommodation and healthy recreation.

There is an international agreement in process of ratification for providing free treatment for V.D. in the various ports, but vice is well organised and its temptations made subtle and attractive, and a great deal of need exists for strenuous efforts at counter attraction.

To those who have not made a special study of the subject, perhaps one of the most enlightening addresses of the Conference was that on " Opium and other dangerous drugs," by the Hon. Mrs. Alfred Littleton. The subject was somewhat technical and there is not time here to do anything like justice to Mrs. Littleton's careful historical survey and analysis of the situation. She divided her subject into two parts, opium smoking and opium eating, and pointed out that while opium smoking was an eastern habit, largely Chinese, opium eating, mainly in the form of derivitives such as morphia and heroine, was a western vice. Since the agreement of 1911 there has been no export of Indian opium into China. Opium is still smoked in Burmah and other parts of the Indian Empire, but is gradually being put down. With regard to the eating of opium in India, she read an extract from a recent report which stated that it is used mainly in India where, in view of the fact that in many parts of the country there is no proper medical aid available, it is very valuable and necessary, especially in the cases of children and old people. That used in that way it is discontinued when the need for it is passed, and that it should be both unnecessary, and possibly even cruel, to cut off supplies.

In some of the Crown Colonies, however, a large revenue is obtained by the sale of opium for smoking purposes, and although it is contended, in extenuation, that the smokers are mainly Chinese, it is a questionable method of obtaining funds by any Government.

For dealing with the consumption of the derivitives, morphia and heroine, international legislation is badly needed. The drug habit is very bad in America and strong feeling exists against it. It is estimated that 500 tons per annum is the necessary world supply for legitimate medical and scientific purposes. If England and America could stand together to combat the evil a great step forward would be made possible.

Speaker after speaker mentioned the development of the League of Nations as one of the hopes of the world and the work that it had already done and might do in the future was constantly referred to.

Diplomatists, as such, distinctly suffered at the hands of some of the speakers. Mrs. Swanwick urged the necessity for democratic control in foreign affairs. She said that she did not underrate the difficulties, the chief of which was perhaps the difficulty of obtaining sufficient accurate and reliable information on which to base one's opinions, but she believed that if people really desired to find out facts, that could be overcome, and there was a vast body of kind heartedness and decent public opinion in the world which at present was almost mute because of the second difficulty of making its voice heard effectively.

Secret Treaties were now a thing of the past, as any Treaty had to be ratified by Parliament, but there were still "conversations" which seemed almost as binding and of which no one knew anything until their result was inevitable. She quite realised that in certain difficult and delicate situations the proceedings must be, for a time at least, private, in order that efforts at adjustment should not be jeopardised by public misunderstanding and misrepresentation, but she would like to see this country "enfant terrible" of Europe, letting in light, that the peoples might know to what their Governments were committing them before that point was reached at which those commitments were inevitable.

The subject of the " International Mind in Trade and Finance " was certainly to many, one of the most interesting of the Conference, possibly because the revision of our economic systems is one of the most crying and fundamental needs of the present time ; for no one seems able to hit on a satisfactory solution that will disentangle the network of (so called) conflicting interests, in which the nations are tied so tightly, that they seem unable to rise from the grip of the complicated issues that drag them all down into one great confusion. Perhaps, as some of the speakers pointed out, it is a change of heart that is needed, and the realisation that the interests of the various nations do *not* really conflict ; that they have the same rights and the same needs, and that what will cure one will be the right medicine for all at the same time ; and it may be by that test that any new system of economic reconstruction must be tried. The speakers, however, were concerned, quite rightly, with details and economics in practise. Prof. Caroline Spurgeon, President of the International Federation of University Women, urged that the time has come when trained women should take part in trade and finance. She thought that the greatest barrier hitherto had been disinclination on the part of women themselves, as they were apt to lack interest in this department of life. They had no experience and little taste for it, but it was essential now, that educated women should take their part, and help to tackle industrial problems. It has been said that university training unfits women for commerce, but surely it is the all-round culture that is required, mental ability, breadth of view, fairness of judgment, accuracy, etc. The best trained minds with the highest ideals should control, and the first essential is to overcome the inertia of the women themselves.

Prof. Hobson again dwelt on the Interdependence of Nations. Most wars, he asserted, are due to economic causes, mainly the desire

to control raw materials. There is now a certain *standardisation* on the side of consumption, similar kinds of clothes, vehicles, food, recreation, etc., are demanded, and this is coupled with *specialisation* on the side of supply. This begets the possibility for great maladjustment and governments are in a position to monopolise the sources of supply, as for example, oil. Politics and economics have conflicting interests and maladjustment is the result. A few countries are self-contained, e.g., China and Russia, but among the great civilised nations many would perish if cut off from sources of supply. Countries still have the right to refuse to deal with their neighbours, but trade relations are an elaborate process of co-operation, not of war and competition. The way in which modern statistics are served up convey the impression that the competition is between the various countries for a limited market, but in reality the most severe competition is between rival firms in the same nation. Nations possess various assets in the way of raw resources, traditional skill and natural advantages, and what is required is free trade based on a doctrine of solidarity of interests between countries. The predominant interest must be the interest of humanity as a whole. Selfish agression must cease ; all countries should participate in the advantageous development of their own resources, and, if the developed peoples will treat the less developed equitably, then the national mind will be established on the basis of the golden rule.

Prof. Hobson was followed by Sir George Paish, who dealt with International Loans, Banking and Commerce, as three allied parts of one subject. It is impossible in so short a report as this to reproduce his carefully reasoned statement and marshalled facts. The nations, he emphasised, are one great economic unit. Owing to international loans for various purposes every nation is interested in every other nation, and a policy that would keep capital at home would at this stage be suicidal. Isolation is impossible. If we only go on helping backward nations we shall see a great leap forward in the abolition of poverty. Asia must be helped to open up by loans for railways ; Russia should be assisted to recover. Since England adopted the policy of loans for expansion her wealth has doubled every thirty years and there is no reason why it should not double again in the next thirty. With regard to Banking, he reminded his audience that bankers could only handle what the public deposited with them for safe keeping, and it is here that small savings count and are important. The large sums which are needed for further development are only accumulated by the surplus savings of the investors, and we should therefore practise economy, save more and use it wisely. Our margin for lending is dependent on the productive capacity of our industries, and by promoting that producing power we can increase our own well-being as well as assist others. A banker should be the friend of every nation, and by so doing help to create an atmosphere in which war is not possible. Russia is now asking for a loan of £250,000,000. He hoped and believed they would get it, for with the expansion of the other nations our own well-being will expand, the wealth of the world will increase as it has never yet increased and there will be no war.

It is surely a stirring and significant thing that so much of vital and living interest can be put into a subject that is usually considered as such dry bones as international finance and economics. One felt after listening to Prof. Hobson and Sir George Paish, that the much longed for Peace Consciousness has at least come to a robust childhood, but a much needed and stern word of warning was supplied by Prof. de l'Isle Burns, of the London University, who attended instead of Lord Parmoor.

Of course, said the Professor, *all* war *was* inevitable in just the few days or even weeks before it broke out. If the present methods in economics and politics were persisted in another war was certain, probably in about six years, and the time to prevent that war was not in the future when it had matured, but *now*. People still supported the preparations for war to a larger extent than they were aware of. Of the various taxes a proportion of 8d. in the shilling was spent on the war departments, and only 4d. on peaceful development, including education, civil service, etc., and of that 8d. *two hundred thousand pounds* a year were spent in inventing poison gas. The next war would be one of chemicals, and there now existed a poison in the form of a fine, invisible, odourless powder which, if scattered over a town, would kill off the whole of the civilian population in two days. The older chemists did not like their job, but they did it, as did the younger men, for of course research on similar lines was going on in many countries, and unless it were possible to revolutionise national policies an outbreak of hostilities somewhere, no one could foresee exactly where, was inevitable. Fortunately for the ultimate destiny of humanity, said the Professor, we had really only just emerged from barbarism and were as yet hardly civilised, there were many ages of progress yet in front, so that even if the peoples persisted in continuing to make wars, for some time yet, there might still be the prospect of the Golden Age ahead.

In my country, said Madam Kallas, of Esthonia, we have a saga which tells the story of a herald who was sent out to proclaim an outbreak of war, but on his way he met with the symbols of war, the raven, the wolf, famine and plague, so that he turned back in horror from his mission ; and she read to the audience an extract from the legend.

As one sat through the various sessions one realised both how much was being done and how much still remained to do in the great human causes, and the increased knowledge obtained at the meetings begot a great determination to persevere, with the certainty of ultimate success, for to requote the closing words of the chairman, we know that we have God on our side, inasmuch as we are working for " peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

This brief survey is, of course, chiefly remarkable for the amount that has been left out and the number of fine speakers who are not even mentioned, but I hope that it has given some slight indication of the aim and spirit of the Conference, and that every one will order the verbatim report.

M. M. Sharples.