(December 9, 1929)

The Pacific Conference

BY THE HON. N.W. ROWELL, K.C.

VICE-PRESIDENT, G. M. SMITH:—Mr. Rowell has just returned from the Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations at Kioto, Japan. We are going to learn what the Institute is. It is an information association, I understand, of representatives of the various peoples of east and west, who meet in a sort of informal League of Nations, I believe it has been described, on a regional basis. At the November conference this country was represented by an extremely able group of men who gave up a good deal of time from their professions to represent this country. The leader of the delegation was Mr. Rowell who, we know, was especially fitted to represent this country with his long experience of public affairs of this country and with his great knowledge of international affairs. It has not been surprising to read in the press that he played a very important part at the conference and that he gave a masterly representation of Canada's point of view in respect of Pacific affairs. We are extremely grateful to him for coming here from a desk, no doubt accumulated with piles of work, to give us so early his impressions of the conference. Mr. Rowell.

HON. MR. ROWELL:—As the chairman has announced this conference was held at Kioto, Japan. Kioto is the ancient capital, one of the ancient capitals of that Kingdom, and for centuries was the cultural center of Japan. There art and literature and religion found their highest expression in the Kingdom of Japan. In fact when our ancestors were roaming the wilds of Britain, a very high degree of culture was to be found in the cities of Kioto and Nava and other centers of Japan. It is interesting for us to recall that it was in the city of Kioto in 1867 that the Shogun, whose family had ruled Japan for more than two centuries, surrendered to the Emperor his power and privileges, and military feudalism came to an end in Japan. So 1867 marks the birth of modern Japan. In the same year across the Pacific the colonies of Britain united to form the Canadian confederation. And there is that interesting link binding Canada to modern Japan—they started their national careers in the same year.

As the chairman has pointed out, the Institute of Pacific Relations is an informal gathering of men interested in Pacific problems, coming from the nations bordering on the Pacific. Its object, as expressed in its constitution, is to study the conditions of the people of the Pacific with a view to improving their mutual relations. It is not an ambitious, though a very important object: to study the conditions of the peoples of the Pacific with a view to the improvement of their mutual relations. The Institute of Pacific Relations was not formed for the purpose of settling international disputes. It does not undertake to adjudicate upon issues arising between nations on the Pacific. By its constitution it is forbidden from expressing any opinion on the matters discussed or from passing any resolution. That is designed to prevent the institute from being turned into a propaganda organization to further any particular policy. The belief of the members of the institute is that much of international misunderstanding, much of international ill-will, much of international distrust, arises out of the ignorance of one people of the life, the habits, the conditions and the ideals of others. And that if men, widely separated geographically and yet closely connected it may be by sea, the products of different civilizations, were to meet together around a common table and exchange views on matters of common interest, particularly on the points on which they differ, they can get each other's viewpoint. The view is that if men in a friendly way can meet together to discuss these points of difference, international misunderstanding among them will be removed, international distrust will be dispelled and good will and international understanding will be promoted. That is the whole object of the institute.

May I say a word on its organization, because since I

returned, or while passing from the Pacific over to Toronto, I have been asked one question more than another, which is, "What is this Institute of Pacific Relations anyway?" Well, as the chairman has intimated it was organized by these groups of men in these different countries in 1925. Our friends in the United States were the first to suggest the idea. A group of Canadians, Chinese, Japanese, Australians and New Zealanders joined them in forming the Institute. In 1927 they were joined by a British group, and a constitution was framed and the Institute is governed by what is termed the Pacific Council, which consists of one representative from the international groups in the seven countries bordering on the Pacific including Australia and New Zealand. Sir Robert Borden is the Canadian member of the Pacific Council. They have a secretariat at Honolulu which is a *liaison* between the different national groups that conducts research in the problems arising on the Pacific which it is desired should be considered at the approaching conference; and they make plans for the conference which is to be held every two years. The last conference was at Honolulu. This conference took place at Kioto. The delegates or representatives which attend the conferences are chosen by the international groups in each country. In Canada we have an institute known as the Canadian Institute of International Affairs affiliated with the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, and that Canadian Institute of International Affairs is the Canadian unit of the Institute of Pacific affairs and the representatives who went from Canada were chosen by that Canadian Institute. It is entirely unofficial. So much so that it was brought to the attention of the council, which met at Mara a week before the conference assembled, that two nations, two governments that were greatly interested in the problems coming up, would like to have observers from their foreign offices present to listen in on the discussions. The council was of the opinion, as were the national groups concerned, that to permit representatives of foreign offices to sit on the discussions at the round tables would be contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Institute and it was intimated that such could not be done.

The method by which the institute proceeded was briefly

this. The mornings were devoted to round-table discussions of the subjects on the *agenda;* the afternoons were devoted to committee meetings and official social functions, and there was hardly a day passed that our Japanese friends did not have some kind of official function for the entertainment of the delegates. I think I may safely say, no matter where the institute may go in the future to hold its meetings, no country will be able to equal the extent and variety and interest of the hospitality which our Japanese hosts extended to the conference.

The evenings were devoted to more popular discussion or presentation of the subjects considered at the round-tables and the press was admitted to these meetings. The press was not admitted to the round-tables nor were any others than the actual members of the conference. But I must say this in reference to the Japanese press. While they appeared to be greatly disappointed that they were not to be admitted to the round-tables (because it was in the round-tables the copy was to be had—the discussions in the evening did not present them with big headlines as a rule) they accepted it in the best possible grace and there was no attempt throughout the entire session by any Japanese reporter or paper to take advantage of the rule that the proceedings of the round-table should not be discussed. I think I should say this further, and I am sure I am expressing in this the view of our delegates who are journalists—and we had several distinguished members—we formed the highest opinion of the Japanese press. I never saw reporters so insistent and persistent in trying to get news within the limit which was permitted them under the rules of the conference, and so far as photographing was concerned, you could hardly sit down to a meal that you did not hear the click and flash-light and they were taking photographs. Really, they were the most persistent press men that I have ever met with, but the most genial and the most courteous and friendly one could desire to meet. And they have great newspapers in Japan. We had two represented at the conference, the circulation of one of which is approximately two million and of the other a little over two million. They are great journalists, among the leading journalists of the world.

Now the heart of the conference was in the round-tables. That is where the difficult questions were discussed. May I indicate the composition of the conference. The following groups were represented by the number of delegates I will give you, as indicating the strength of the groups. The United States, 45; Great Britain, 15; Japan, 47; China, 31; Canada, 29; Australia, 11; New Zealand, 7; Korea, 5; Philippines, 8, making 198 members of the conference apart from the secretariat; and then groups from Russia, France, Holland and Mexico each sent an observer who was entitled to the privileges of the conference, and the secretariat of the League of Nations at Geneva sent two members of its staff, and the International Labor Office at Geneva sent three members to sit in on the discussions and see what took place and to hear the result of the discussions at the round-table.

Now the subjects which came up for discussion were such as the machine age—I did not care much for the name myself, but I believe it is recognized as a proper description of what we understand by the industrial evolution and what modern science has done. It is the impact of modern civilization upon the art, architecture, the industry, the family and religion and the countries bordering on the Pacific. And it came first. And we spent three days discussing it—most interesting and informative; but some of our Canadians expressed to me the view that we were wasting a lot of time discussing this academic question. Well, I do not admit, and I think the majority of the delegates would not admit, that time was lost; but it is very significant why the program committee put that subject on for three days. Contention in China and Japan over the Manchurian question and over Chinese relations to the other powers was such that the program committee did not dare to put this on the *agenda* at the opening of the conference lest there should be an explosion in connection with it. They felt it was essential that the members of the conference should have an opportunity to become acquainted with each other, to talk over non-controversial matters and know each other, and there would be less likelihood of difficulty over the bigger question. Other subjects were: Chinese foreign relations in the Pacific, which touched upon

the existing machinery available for settlement of disputes in the Pacific and the relations of the Pacific peoples to these different organizations; food and population—of tremendous importance to Japan which is cultivating almost every inch of ground, whose population is increasing one million a year, but finds no outlet for her population by emigration because most countries to which her people would like to emigrate are closed against her; foreign investments in China, which dealt with the existing condition of investments, the necessity of foreign capital and the conditions upon which foreign capital might be invested; and the last subject, the future of the Institute.

Now as the Manchurian question was the most acuté perhaps I can illustrate the procedure of the conference by dealing with that one question, and may I say every other question I have referred to was dealt with in the same way. There is no time to go over them all. It was my privilege to visit Manchuria before the conference and I am very glad I was able to do so because it aided one very much in understanding the problem. Manchuria is a territory which is slightly smaller than the province of Ontario, just a few thousand square miles difference. It is in the northeast of China and it is bounded on the east by Russia. About eighty years ago or more Russia obtained the sea coast of Manchuria as a maritime province of Siberia; and it is bounded on the north by Russia; bounded on the west by Russia, Siberia and Mongolia; and on the south by China, the Yellow Sea and Korea. As I have said the area is slightly smaller than Ontario. The population in twenty-two years has increased from twelve million to twenty-eight million people. There is no migration in the world's history such as the migration into Manchuria in recent years. If we get one hundred thousand or two hundred thousand permanent settlers in a year we think we have done wonderfully well. They are settling in there at the rate of a million a year, coming up from the other provinces of China. Undoubtedly the civil war in the other provinces and the devastation has impelled immigration to the north, where there is this remarkable country, rich prairie land, like our western provinces, divided by mountain ranges, and having also rich mineral resources, particularly coal. There is one

coal mine east of Mukden where the Japanese are mining over six million tons a year from one mine. That is the general situation so far as the country is concerned.

In 1897 Russia obtained a concession to build a railway across Manchuria to give her a direct line to the sea as part of her trans-Siberian system. You see Manchuria runs out into Siberia and so they get a direct line across Manchuria for their operation of the Siberian system. They also got a concession to build a line due south from Harbin just about the center of Manchuria to Port Arthur and then they got the lease of the Liao-Tung peninsula, including Port Arthur, for twenty-one years. It was this Russian entry into Manchuria, with this approach to Korea and Japan that brought on the Russo-Japanese war. By the treaty of Portsmouth Russia transferred to Japan the Chinese Eastern railway from a point about midway between Harbin and Mukden south to Port Arthur. She transferred the lease of the Liao-Tung peninsula, and so Japan came into possession of the rights which Russia had with respect to these two important properties. These rights were subsequently confirmed by China, and Japan thereupon formed the company known as the Siberian Manchuria Railway company. The majority of the capital is owned by the Japanese government. They have rebuilt the road and the railway is one of the best equipped and most efficient operating, and I think probably one of the most profitable railways in the world. The railway supplies very much the functions of the East India Company. It really governs the part of Manchuria in which it is located. It builds schools and hospitals and it has generally developed the territory. In 1915, as part of the twenty-one demands, Japan demanded that the lease of the Liao-Tung peninsula be extended to ninety-nine years and the railway concession also be extended to ninety-nine years. As a result China entered into a treaty giving these rights to Japan so that Japan is entrenched in Manchuria with enormous development, and the Japanese tell us has expended a billion dollars in development in Manchuria. They certainly have done a very fine piece of work from the standpoint of development work, with industries, electric light, and everything in beautiful order.

Now what does China say? The present government says those treaties of 1915 were forced upon us in our weakness in the time of the great war. We decline to recognize them. The original lease of the Liao-Tung peninsula has expired. You must return it. You have no right to any claim on the railway and you are exercising jurisdiction by your police force which is entirely inconsistent with Chinese sovereignty which you must respect. Japan in addition says, not only is Manchuria essential to the economic life of Japan, as a source of food and raw materials and a market for the manufactured product, but it is our first line of defence against Russia. We fought Russia there. Japanese soldiers lie buried. We poured out the best blood of Japan there to drive the Russians out. It is our first line of defence; and they say, in effect, from the standpoint of their economic interests, "we will stay there until we are put out.". On the other hand China says: "it is our territory. We are sovereigns of that territory. It is our first line of defence. The Manchus came from the east to conquer and rule China for more than two hundred and fifty years. Manchuria is our defence against Russia and Japan. Whoever holds Manchuria commands China." And it was in an atmosphere like that and with acute conditions like that we entered into discussions at the round table, and for these discussions the committee chose a man who had some experience in public life and international affairs to preside over this round-table, Lord Hailsham one. Mr. Rowland Boyden, of Boston, a very distinguished United States lawyer, Mr. MacDonald of New York, and the speaker, were the four chosen to take charge of these round-tables; and as I know more about what took place at my own round-table perhaps I can illustrate from that.

Now I asked a professor of International law at the Washington University who had written books on Manchuria, for we had no less than eight volumes and pamphlets on Manchuria printed for the conference. The British corps prepared one; the American corps had two; the Japanese had a magnificent volume prepared by the Manchurian railway. As a matter of mechanical work and literary skill in presenting a case that whole statement could not be surpassed. And then they had two smaller volumes,

but every delegate was supposed to have read at least some of these books. This American professor opened the discussion by pointing out the existing treaties affecting the situation, and I limited him to fifteen minutes to do it, which is pretty hard on a professor, dealing with a very large and important question. Then the Japanese presented their point of view, and it was presented by the editor in chief of one of those great newspapers; and then the Chinese presented their point of view, presented by the president of one of the Universities. And each of them did it in about fifteen minutes, clearly and concisely, and at the end of an hour we had the story before us. Then it was the duty of the chairman to take charge. And so we took up one point after another, with a view to eliciting the facts.

We went through point after point for three days. We did not reach any conclusion. We were forbidden to do it. We did not pass any resolution. On the night after the conference closed—it closed on the noon of Saturday—a gathering of between fifty and sixty Japanese and Chinese delegates met together at dinner. They sang songs together, they sang national anthems, and they had an excellent time as good fellows together. Now the man who informed me of it said that would have been utterly impossible at the opening of the conference. The Japanese would not have accepted the Chinese invitation to dinner and the Chinese would not have accepted the Japanese. It is because of conditions established at this conference they were able to do it.

Let me summarize the result. Each saw there was more in the other's point of view than they had previously given credit for. Each saw that their suspicions and distrust of the other had not so much foundation as they had previously thought it had. And each reached the conclusion that the best national interests of both China and Japan would be promoted by a good understanding between them rather than by emphasizing the points of friction between them; and one of the most interesting points in the discussion in our round-table was the presentation—and I think it was done probably by Canadian delegates—of the work of the International Joint Commission, between Canada and the United States, and how we had a commission there sitting permanently dealing with matters arising along the border.

Particularly in connection with boundary waters. That intensely interested them and the Japanese suggested, not a commission like that, but a friendly informal commission, that they might meet together and discuss points and see if they could find a solution.

You say, what is the result? Well, all I can say is this, that in the 1928 conference the acute issue was between Great Britain and China. There had been a boycott of British goods and distressing incidents which had stirred national feeling and British troops were still in China. Sir Frederick White led the British delegates at that conference. They established such a friendly relationship with the Chinese that the Chinese asked White to come back with them to China and White went and is today the foreign adviser to the national Government at Nankin. That made a valuable contribution to better understanding between Great Britain and China. And I believe this conference has made better understanding between China and Japan, and that better understanding is essential to the peace of the Pacific and the progress of the Pacific area.

There was of course the lighter side of the conference, the social side. Some of us were privileged to attend the banquet given by the British-Japan society, in Tokio, after the conference was over, presided over by Sir John Pilley, the British ambassador and Sir John had referred to the subjects at the conference. He said he was glad to say however, that he noticed by the press that the conference had not neglected the lighter side. He said, I read in an evening paper an interview with one of the principal delegates in which he said that one of the principal impressions was the devotion of the entire staff to the youngest stenographer. After the dinner he asked me if I did not recognize the quotation. I said I did not. Well, he said, it was from your interview I quoted. So naturally I sent out and bought a paper and there it was. He had quoted it literally. What I had said was: "I was much impressed with the devotion of the entire staff, from the general secretariat to the youngest stenographer, to the work of the conference." And so while newspapers do their best, one should not take too seriously the literal accuracy of some newspaper interviews.

I have referred to Japanese hospitality. It was a great pleasure to us all to visit Japan, to get better acquainted with the Japanese people, to get better acquainted with each other. We had a delightful time in meeting in a social way with our American, our British, our Chinese, our Japanese and our Australian, our New Zealand, our Korean and Philippine friends. As I have said our Japanese friends did everything to provide for our comfort and entertainment, and I think I should add that Mr. and Mrs. Marler, our Canadian ministers, did everything they could to make our visit profitable and pleasant and a success. We are deeply indebted to the Marlers for what they did for us. Quite frankly, when it was first proposed to send a Minister to Japan, I was one who thought, possibly the government was proceeding a little rapidly. I come back today firmly convinced that, with the marvellous developments which are going on in the Pacific, with the part which Canada is destined to play—because who can forsee the greatness of this nation in the years that lie before us?—it is a wise far-sighted thing to have a Canadian Minister in Japan; and he is going to do great work for Canada, in the marvellous future which lies before the countries on the Pacific, for China is only awakening into a larger life, with a marvellous country, where a fourth of the human race lives. This country has a great part to play, and I believe Canada will be equal to her opportunity.

THE CHAIRMAN:—I believe this is the eighth time that Mr. Rowell has addressed the Canadian Club on subjects of great public interest. I hope from time to time he will continue to describe his experiences and enlighten us on various public questions. Mr. Rowell, we thank you very much for the admirably clear exposition of the important work of the conference.