

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ZIONIST CONFERENCE.

This was my first Zionist Conference in South Africa. I had attended two Zionist World Congresses and a few conferences of Zionists in other countries. I did not anticipate, however, that at a Conference held six thousand miles away from the centre of Jewish world activity I would witness any impressive scenes. I had anticipated a purely business-like gathering of Jews living in a far-away colony. What I did see, however, was a Conference, many scenes of which might do credit to a world Zionist Congress.

The opening session took place in the spacious and well-built Town Hall of Johannesburg. There was an audience present of some seventeen hundred persons. Outside of the delegates, all those present had paid for admission. This speaks highly of the interest taken here by the Jewish population in Zionism.

The decoration of the large hall was a credit to the silent band of workers—the honorary stewards. Besides the bunting and the flags, the electrically-lit Mogen David, in the centre of which was a fine portrait of our late leader, Dr. Theodor Herzl, drew special attention. The presence on the platform of the Mayor of Johannesburg, wearing his chain of office, lent prestige to the occasion. The fact that he was a Jew was made specially significant in his remarks.

It was proper that the first address to the conference should be in Hebrew. It was proper also that the chief spokesman of our National tongue in the African sub-Continent should be delegated to this sacred duty. The Chief Rabbi spoke with magnetic force and, although it must be admitted there were a few present who could not understand Hebrew, yet the significance of the occasion was generally felt. The same feeling was experienced when, later in the evening, a Hebrew cable was read from Bialik. The Hebrew words of our great Poet thrilled the audience—although the meaning of those words was not too well grasped.

The reading of messages at a conference is usually a routine function. The messages, however, which were read at this conference aroused tremendous enthusiasm. The message of the Prime Minister of this country proved an historic document. We were not unaware of the tremendous services rendered to the Zionist cause by General Smuts. It was not, however, until the message was read at the conference that the full significance of his recent interview in London with Dr. Weizmann was realised. There was a fine message from Dr. Weizmann himself—cabled only a few hours previously from New York.

The Presidential address delivered by Mr. A. M. Abrahams was listened to with interest. It might be here mentioned that the generalship of Mr. Abrahams in conducting the sessions of the conference drew commendation from all. He has an open, broad-minded nature which sympathises with all sections in the Zionist ranks and demands constitutional procedure from all.

Dr. Alexander Goldstein began his address very quietly. His is a small, well-knit figure. At first one began to wonder just what quality it was that has made this man so well known to the Jewish masses throughout Russia and America. It soon became

evident, however, that we were confronted with an orator of rare eloquence and a tremendous fighter for the cause of Jewish National pride. In picturesque language the speaker outlined the present position of our brethren in East Europe. He did not speak from hearsay. He himself was a Ukrainian Jew, and he had experienced the pogroms and had seen dead bodies of his martyred brothers and sisters. He asked what hope was there for the hundreds of thousands of our brethren in Eastern Europe. The gates of the whole world were closed against them. No country wanted them, and in the lands in which they lived they were pillaged, persecuted and murdered. Yet they lived because of the one hope which filled their hearts—the hope of Palestine. It was the feeling that an opportunity was being given to the Jewish people to renew their national homeland in Erez Israel, that kept the light kindled in the souls of our brethren. Thousands of them have already gone to Palestine—many of them walking the way. Hundreds and thousands were ready to go if only the opportunity permitted them to do so. The duty devolved upon Jews living in happier countries to give of their means to see that their hopes should be made possible.

And so the speaker went on, his peroration rising each moment in intensity and finally reaching heights which aroused the audience to a tremendous pitch of enthusiasm.

It was an evening which is likely to be remembered with pride by all present. Congratulations are certainly due to the organisers for their wisdom in arranging the opening session of the conference to take place in the evening—an innovation here—and for their courage in engaging the largest hall in Johannesburg for the purpose.

The Hebrew Education Conference held on Thursday morning was a significant function. There was much heat evident in the debates. It was on this occasion that the attack was made by the Chief Rabbi on Jewish parents who sent their children to Catholic schools, and which gained a good deal of subsequent public attention. The discussion generally was of a healthy nature. The result, however, was disappointing, inasmuch as all the conference decided was that another conference be shortly called by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Zionist Federation. One can only hope that when the "conference" is called some concrete decisions will be arrived at.

The discussion on the adoption of the report of the Executive Council of the Federation was a heated affair. It was evident that very few of the delegates had taken the opportunity of thoroughly digesting a document, which had been carefully prepared. What seemed to particularly offend the delegates was that the report dealt very vaguely with the Carlsbad Zionist Congress. It was pointed out that reports on the deliberations of the Congress had been given publicity to in the columns of the "Zionist Record." It was at the moving of the closure of the debate that Mr. B. S. Hersch, an active member of the old Executive, felt it his duty to protest by leaving the platform. Later Mr. Hersch explained that he had done so as a protest against the attitude of some of the delegates in moving the closure of the debate.

An interesting event took place during Friday morning session when Mr. S. Hillman, who had

recently returned from Palestine, gave a remarkable and enthusiastic account of his experiences. It was gratifying to listen to this successful hard-headed merchant dilating upon the fine business and agricultural opportunities awaiting those who were ready to invest money in Palestine. Mr. Hillman spoke of the amazing fertility of the soil and of the tremendous enthusiasm of the pioneers. He gave it as his opinion that money invested by South African Jews in Palestine will prove a genuinely profitable investment. The whole gist of his address was of so optimistic a nature that it spread like a golden ray over the conference atmosphere.

The discussion on the National Fund report created a veritable upheaval of discordant notes. It became evident that in spite of the fine work accomplished in South Africa for this Fund, there was a prevalent feeling that much more could and should be done. In this connection the fine example of Capetown was repeatedly mentioned.

On Saturday evening a very delightful reception was held for the delegates, and credit is due to the wives of the members of the Executive Council for the splendid manner in which everything was organised. All present had a most charming time. The two artists, Miss Phoebe Joel and Mr. Joel Meyerson, rendered songs in a delightful manner which the audience much appreciated. On this occasion the delegates were treated to a friendly and fraternal speech by Mr. Isaac Ochberg of Capetown.

The ballroom of the Carlton Hotel presented a very imposing appearance on Sunday morning when the delegates gathered for the final session of the conference. The hall seemed appropriate for such a function. In the arrangements and the seating of the delegates there were again seen the labours of the silent band of workers—the honorary stewards. At this stage a word of praise must be rendered to Mr. A. I. Miller, the honorary chief steward, for his unselfish work.

The election of the new Executive brought in four new men in the persons of Mr. S. Gordon, Mr. D. Getz, Dr. W. Sachs, and Mr. B. Gering, all sincere workers of whom a good deal can be expected in the way of furthering Zionist progress.

The attention which was given by the audience to the report on the Keren Hayesod activities by Mr. I. Kuper was proof of the keen interest taken in the securing of funds for the reconstruction work in Palestine. On this occasion Dr. Goldstein delivered a particularly powerful address, dwelling on the extraordinary evil caused in Palestine by the lack of proper support of the Keren Hayesod by the Jews throughout the world. The votes of thanks with which the conference was concluded were received with much enthusiasm. It was evident that behind each resolution there was considerable sincerity and good feeling.

In considering the conference proceedings as a whole, it must be admitted that a number of important problems were left over to be dealt with by the incoming Executive, without any definite knowledge being ascertained of the feelings of the delegates on these questions. Considerable time was taken up in the debating on minor points. On the whole, however, the conference was a demonstration of the strength of Zionist forces in South Africa. It must be

remembered that the organising of this particular conference had been an exceedingly difficult task. There was postponement after postponement. The news at the last moment of the inability of Mr. Nahum Sokolow's arriving in South Africa to open the conference seemed at first to be so serious as to entirely endanger the very calling of the conference. The facts that in spite of this disappointment the conference was held and had successful sessions and that finally the Keren Hayesod campaign was inaugurated so successfully are surely proof that fundamentally Zionism in South Africa is sound.

The delegates returned to their homes generally encouraged by the proceedings and enthused by the personality of our guest, Dr. Alexander Goldstein, whose presence throughout the conference was an inspiration to all.

DAVID DAINOW.

FIANCILLES.

BERNSTEIN — SEGALL. — The engagement is announced of Bryna (Blanche), daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. Bernstein, 90, Cape Road, Port Elizabeth, to Joseph Segall, of Smithfield, O.F.S.

SWATT — SILVERMAN. — The engagement is announced between Janie, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. Swatt, of Windhuk, and David N. Silverman, only son of Mr. and Mrs. N. Silverman, of Johannesburg.

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