

isters of many leading countries can and do meet fairly regularly at Geneva, they discuss intricate and delicate political questions, play golf, lunch and dine together, and in this way reach a much closer appreciation of one another's personalities, points of view, and difficulties.

The closer understanding so reached is an essential basis for international agreement, and it would be difficult to secure without some permanent organisation for bringing such people together for the furtherance of international relations. It must not be forgotten, too, that within and around the organisation of Geneva, there has grown up a very solid body of opinion which aims at securing permanent peace among nations, and in many countries there are active groups steadily working to further this object.

To the Labour Conference which I attended in 1930, each States-member was entitled to send four delegates, besides advisers, secretaries, etc., who were attached to the delegations. There were thus between 350 and 400 persons accredited to the conference, representing more than 50 different countries; and in addition there were many members of the staff of the Labour Office, technical experts, interpreters, etc., many interested observers, newspaper correspondents, and others. The conference was held in a large public hall, specially arranged for the purpose.

One remembers now the crowd around the cloakroom counter twice a day, gesticulating and shouting excitedly for hats and coats; the artist making pencil portraits or caricatures of celebrities around the conference; the tearoom where we adjourned to avoid some unusually long and boring speaker, and where we chatted and smoked and made friends with people from all over the world.

There was the information bureau, staffed by two girls with an amazing knowledge of languages; a publications office where we got all sorts of printed matter bearing on the conference; the lockers, where mail and papers were left; the post and telegraph office, the writing room, the tourist bureau, and the many committee rooms. All these were around a big entrance chamber which opened into the main conference room.

In the conference room was a stage with chairs and tables where sat the president, secretary, and staff advisers on the particular questions at issue, the interpreters, official reporters, etc. In front was a tribunal, something like a rough pulpit, from which all speeches were made. A delegate could speak from his seat only on point of order; for all other speeches he had to mount the tribunal.

In the body of the hall were seats and tables for the delegates, who were arranged in alphabetical order according to the countries they represented. Each delegate was provided with ear-phones and a tuning switch. In front of the tribune were six closed-in cubicles, where sat six interpreters, facing telephones. For important speeches, as the speech was delivered, interpretations were made into five separate languages simultaneously. A delegate could then listen direct to the speaker, or, by using his ear-phones and switch, connect up with any one of the five telephonic interpretations. He could thus get the speech at any time in any one of six different languages.

Every individual is more or less the product of the environment in which he has grown up. There are fundamental differences in geographical conditions, in industrial and political structure, in history, customs, traditions, and associations. Such differences provide the background of experience from which one's individual outlook must spring. They result in differences in standards, in ideas, in personality, and in the approach to and interpretation of the various issues that are the subject of international negotiation. Out of such differences there arise misunderstandings, and these misunderstandings must be overcome, for understanding and sympathy are the basic essentials of agreement and co-operation.

Oratory in Europe is still one of the arts, and the orator is often an artist in the same sense as a prima donna. He displays qualities and characteristics which an Englishman would associate with the stage rather than with the speaker's platform. We heard one French speaker at Geneva who would probably have excelled as an operatic singer. He had a beautiful bass voice of extensive range, which he used very effectively. He spoke at great length, and after hearing him once or twice, we usually went out to tea when he got into his stride, and returned to hear the translation when he finished. Generally, the Continental speakers are more forcible, more voluble, and gesticulate more than the English. A

friend remarked one day: "I'd like to handcuff one of these guys, and set him to make a speech. He'd be stone dumb!"

PROBABLY the greatest value in a conference lies in the informal gatherings and the mixing and talking of people, in the friendships made and the understanding developed around but outside the conference itself. Such a conference is the occasion for a great deal of entertaining. There are dinners, lunches, parties, receptions, dances, etc., where people meet and mix socially and get to know one another and one another's points of view. Some of these bring very pleasant memories.

I remember lunching with a Frenchman whose name is known everywhere, and who told us: "It is the highest evidence of civilisation in any people or in any individual to be able to recognise and appreciate what is best in life, and one of the best things in life is good food and good drink. Here," he said, "the French people excel the whole world." The lunch he provided certainly supported his statement.

Another occasion may serve to illustrate the differences and the extraordinary mixtures that occur in such a gathering. I was with an Englishman at a dinner given by some Indians. After dinner an excellent string band was playing chamber music, which certainly was not dance music. Our host, who wished to see his guests enjoying themselves, and who had seen us dancing the night before, pressed us to start a dance. We did our best, and I happened to secure as partner the wife of a Chinese delegate. But I thought to myself: here was I, a New Zealander, in company with an Englishman, the guest of a Hindu potentate in a Swiss hotel, trying to dance American jazz with a Chinese partner, to a German band playing selections from Italian opera.

DESPITE the many difficulties and obstructions much has been achieved at Geneva since the war. The spirit of international co-operation has been inculcated, and the practice of co-operation has made definite advances. The organisation and machinery which is necessary for the conduct of negotia-

tion has become soundly established. The custom of meeting and discussion between representatives of different nations has been developed.

The difficulties of language have been partly overcome, and the technique of translation has been brought to a high point of efficiency.

An expert international civil service has been gathered together and is now highly organised for the furtherance of international co-operation. International questions of all kinds requiring expert advice are being handled by committees of highly specialised voluntary workers drawn from many countries. An information and publications bureau has been built up and has produced between one and two million publications of various kinds. By means such as these solid and steady progress has been made.

There are still difficulties to overcome and much work to do. But one must remember that much of the work is political and continuous. Moreover, there are parish politicians of limited and parochial outlook, and there are demagogues, in international affairs as well as in national politics. But there are others, able people of high principle devoting their lives to the pursuit of a noble ideal. Some of these are found in Geneva, some in other countries.

Looking out from the League of Nations Building at Geneva, one sees in the foreground the clear, placid waters of a beautiful lake dotted with pleasure craft. On the far side are low blue hills, and beyond these hills, far away in the dim distance, on a clear day one can sometimes make out the snow-clad peak of Mont Blanc gleaming in the sunshine. I sometimes think that the occasional glimpse of that high white peak—the highest in Europe—may have some special meaning for those who work at Geneva.

Use Our Booking Offices in Advance

S-O-S

TRAVEL IN COMFORT BY  
CAR

WELLINGTON — PALMERSTON  
NEW PLYMOUTH

# CROSLLEY

**Pentode Output . . . Variable Mu  
Full-Size Dynamic Speaker . . .  
SUPERHETERODYNE**