

Highlights of "Canada Day" At A. C. W. W. Conference

By Ruth Lodge

Imagine 12,000 women massed in the Maple Leaf Gardens! Think of how they travelled there—in seventeen chartered busses from Ontario districts, as well as by car and rail—and by plane and ship from other countries. Picture them pouring forth at noon and again in the late afternoon, filling the streets, crowding the restaurants for blocks around, holding up "Big Business"—(Kresge's Yonge and Carlton St. store was 15 minutes late closing that evening)!

THAT was Canada Day at the A.C.W.W. Conference. And look at the scene in the Gardens itself—the north and seats completely banked with evergreen trees, with a huge illuminated half-globe bearing the map of Canada, and tiers of steps and stages below that to the orchestra pits on the floor. On the south wall was the enormous picture of Queen Elizabeth, with the flags of the Commonwealth beneath it. Around the "boards" were stacked at intervals sheaves of wheat and corn. This was the setting for "Canada Day" in the Gardens.

Delegates from Everywhere

In the red seats were the 900 delegates who had been attending the Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World for the past ten days, many in their colourful native costumes, while the Women's Institute members who came just for Canada Day occupied the blue, green and grey seats. On the platform for the afternoon session were the presidents of the A.C.W.W., the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada and the various provinces, of Les Cercles de Fermieres of Quebec, the Hon. Stuart Garson, Minister of Justice, and delegates from 24 countries.

12,000 Women Sing

It was most impressive to hear those 12,000 women sing the "Women's Institute Ode" and recite the Mary Stewart Collect—standard opening procedures at all W. I. meetings. Mrs. Summers, President, F.W.I.C., in her opening address, stressed that this conference had engendered a more complete understanding of the needs and problems of women in the various countries, and of how these needs and problems could be met; and reported that the A.C.W.W. had been given consultative status with the Food and Agriculture Department of

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the United Nations. After the greetings by Mme. Cadrin, president of Les Cercles de Fermieres, given in French, and the introductions of the provincial presidents, the Hon. Stuart Garson brought greetings from the Canadian Government on behalf of Prime Minister St. Laurent, who was unable to be present.

Popular Music Too

The Junior Farmers' Choir of Oxford County, a group of 68 young people, sang two groups of delightful songs, offering a welcome change from the serious speeches of the afternoon. Their selections were "Dear Land of Home", "Canada, Dear Canada" (composed by their conductor, Henry Clark, especially for the occasion), "One World", "Rolling Down to Rio", "Come to the Fair", and "Oklahoma". Kathleen Stokes, popular organist, played a medley of Strauss Waltzes, which were also much enjoyed.

The greetings from the delegates of the 24 countries represented at the conference was a colourful feature of the afternoon—colourful to both the ear and the eye. All the women spoke in English except the Japanese, who used an interpreter, and their varying accents were most interesting.

Striking Costumes

Those in "European Dress" were the representatives from Australia, England and Wales, Germany, Kenya, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Southern Rhodesia, Union of South Africa, U.S.A. and Jordan. The rest were in their native dress, but space does not permit a description of all the costumes. Madame de Mille from Ceylon was very impressive in a mauve gown with a blue shawl; Mrs. Murray from Eire wore a bright red gown with a bright green shawl; the delegate from Pakistan wore a dazzling yellow costume; and the one from Egypt had an amazing pink hat, a striped dress and a lame shawl. These were interspersed with the starched blouses and headdresses of the ladies from Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands. The most striking European dress was worn by Dr. Olive Robertson of Southern Rhodesia, red dots on a black ground, with red hat and gloves.

Fine Speakers

The best speaker was Dr. Nimbkah of India, who urged women to take a larger part on national and international affairs, as "the men are certainly making a hash of it", she said. The other countries represented were Lebanon, Norway, Denmark, Japan; a representative of the Indian Homemakers' Club spoke for the Canadian Indians. Greetings were read from Northern Rhodesia, Switzerland and Israel.

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The address by Mrs. R. Sayre, U.S.A., retiring president of the A.C.W.W., who spoke of the history and aims of the organization; and the introduction of Mrs. Berry of Australia, the new president, made up the rest of the afternoon programme.

The evening was taken up by the pageant, "Dominion of Destiny", a dramatic and musical history of Canada. The W. I. can be congratulated on the presentation of such an outstanding performance. As well as showing the women from other countries what Canada can produce in music, drama and dancing, it provided an opportunity for many women Canada Day at the A.C.W.W.—Gal 2 to see a colourama they would never see under other circumstances. If a movie had been taken of the pageant, and it were shown to school children, the history of this country would be impressed upon their minds far more graphically than it will ever be from textbooks! The main speaking voice was that of the narrator, and his story covered the time from the first visit of the Vikings up to the Coronation of this year.

Both platforms, the steps and the floor of the arena were used by actors and dancers, and in some of the scenes over a hundred people took part. Soloists Evelyn Gould and Ernst Adams, and various choral groups including a Ukrainian choir with a valatile lady conductor, and a small orchestra, provided the music. The Volkoff Canadian Ballet danced the minuet, Indian dances, Can-can, folk dances, etc. A Precision Squad from the Canadian Red Cross executed a complicated drill of which any male unit could be justly proud. In depicting our Canadian way of life, representatives from the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. displayed gymnastics and drills; and groups of Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Brownies and Cubs repeated their pledges. In the settling of the West, a team of horses drew a covered wagon around the floor, and a chuck-wagon gathered up the sheaves of corn and wheat standing around the "boards". For the Coronation scene, the horses drew on a richly-hung cart upon which rested replicas of the crown, the mace and the orb.

As the pageant lasted for almost three hours, it is impossible to adequately describe it in a few lines. For those who saw it it will remain an indelible memory. As the A.C.W.W. meets only every three years, and at each session more countries are represented, many of whom are anxious to have the conference held in their homelands, it is unlikely that it will again be held in Canada during our lifetime. So for most of the W. I. members who attended the conference, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience! But what an experience!