

World Monetary Talks

An invitation has been sent by President Roosevelt to 42 United Nations and associated governments to attend a post-war monetary conference at Bretton Woods, N. H., starting July 1.

Among the proposals for meeting international financial problems and promoting world trade, which will be considered, two already have received considerable publicity—a \$10,000,000,000 world reconstruction and development bank—a sort of universal RFC—and an \$8,000,000,000 international currency stabilization fund.

The importance of agreement on a definite workable plan for underwriting world economy during the years immediately ahead is obvious. Yet great difficulties may be foreseen in bringing the nations into any single plan.

The stabilization fund, for instance, was hardly initiated by the treasury technicians of 34 countries before it was denounced by certain of our economists. Attacks have since been made on it in both houses of the British parliament. Whatever decision is reached at Bretton Woods will have to run the gantlet of ratification by the legislatures of the signatory powers.

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The memory of the tragic failure of the London world economic conference of 1933 will be present in the White mountains. The high hopes which Secretary Hull and his colleagues took to London were wrecked by greed and intransigence. Viscount Samuel blamed the British government for refusing to abate a jot or tittle of tariff protection.

Some Americans have held President Roosevelt's sudden abandonment of internationalism for economic nationalism largely responsible for the conference ending in a bitter fiasco.

This time, a larger willingness to compromise may reasonably be expected. Eleven years ago it was predicted that if the nations did not succeed in removing world economic unrest, they would play into the hands of the war promoters. The most devastating conflict in history soon followed. The object of the Bretton Woods discussions is to rebuild what war has torn down, and to remove, as far as possible, the economic causes of future wars.

As the conferees contemplate the terrific price that is being paid for past failures at international collaboration, will they again haggle over dollars and cents or pounds and shillings? There can be no permanent political cooperation without economic cooperation.

God forbid that the London conference be repeated.