

# The 1932 Imperial Economic Conference

CHARLES J.G. VERGE

**A**utonomous dominions and colonies of the British Empire met for an Imperial Economic Conference (IEC) in Ottawa from July 21 to August 20, 1932, to discuss the Great Depression. The Canadian Post Office issued four stamps on July 12, 1932, to commemorate this momentous conference (Scott 192-194 and C4, Figure 1).

The delegates admitted the failure of the gold standard and abandoned attempts to return to it. They also agreed to establish a zone of limited or lower tariffs for the British Empire, later known as Imperial free trade, while keeping tariffs high with the rest of the world.

The abandonment of open free trade led to a major rift and split in the National Government of Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald. For a short time in 1924, MacDonald had been the first Labour Party leader to become prime minister of Great Britain. He was re-elected prime minister in 1929 but forced into a National Government coalition in 1931 by the Great Depression.

Soon after the coalition was formed, a general election was called. The election resulted in a Conservative Party landslide victory.

MacDonald remained prime minister until 1935, but his government was dominated by the Conservatives. For this reason, the British delegation to the IEC was led by Conservatives

Stanley Baldwin, lord president of the Council, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Neville Chamberlain.

Both men, in turn, would succeed MacDonald as prime minister. Baldwin (1935-1937) was involved in the King Edward VIII abdication crisis, and Chamberlain (1937-1940) is remembered primarily for his appeasement policy with Hitler and his signing of the "Munich Pact" (Figure 2).

The design process for the Imperial Economic Conference stamps began in early spring 1931, with essays submitted for approval April 21, 1932. The final die proofs were approved by Postmaster General Arthur Sauvé (1875-1944) at different dates during May of that year.

Sauvé served as postmaster general from 1930 to 1935. His initials appear on the die proofs but should not be mistaken for those of J. Alexander Sullivan (1879-1952), who was deputy postmaster general from 1935 to 1945.

The British American Bank Note Company (BABN) printed all four IEC stamps. A Post Office publicity photograph of the four stamps issued for the IEC is shown in Figure 3. The stamps were the first commemoratives produced by BABN for Canada. The company held the stamp printing contract from 1867 to 1897 and regained it in 1930. Prior to the printing of the IEC stamps, BABN had produced only definitive stamps.

The 3¢ and 5¢ IEC stamps were printed in sheets of 400 divided into post office panes of 100; the 13¢ stamp was printed in sheets of 200 cut into post office panes of 100. The 6¢-on-5¢ surcharge on the airmail stamp was printed by electrotpe on already cut-down post office panes of 100.

The 3¢ stamp, showing a cameo of King George V based on a sculpture by Sir Edgar Bertram Mackennal (Figure 4), sculptor to the king, paid the domestic, United States and British Empire rates per ounce. The 3¢ rate, in effect since July 1, 1931, included a 1¢ war tax that had been reintroduced on that date after being in effect from 1915 to 1926.

Mackennal (1863-1931), an Australian sculptor, was trained in Australia, England, France and Italy. After working a few years in Australia, he returned to Paris. His first piece was shown in the 1892 Salon. He is best remembered for his coin and medal designs for the British Empire, including Australia and Great Britain, and for his designs for the 1910 Olympic Games medals.

The portrait of the king used for the design of the 3¢ stamp is based on a sculpture prepared by Mackennal for a British coin (Figure 5). Two plates were laid down to print 100,700,000 stamps.

The broken "E" variety (Figure 6) can be found in position 87 of the lower right pane of plate 2. Because of its placement on the sheet, this variety



Figure 1. Four stamps, including a surcharged airmail stamp, were issued by Canada for the Imperial Economic Conference held in Ottawa in 1932.



Figure 2. Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett (center) receives the British delegation at Ottawa's Union Station. Stanley Baldwin is shown at left and Neville Chamberlain at right. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.





**Figure 3. A Canada Post Office publicity photograph showing the four stamps issued for the IEC.**

*Courtesy of the Canadian Postal Archives.*

can be collected as part of the plate 2 lower right plate block of eight.

The 5¢ stamp paid the per-ounce rate to Universal Postal Union countries in effect since July 1, 1930. It also paid the domestic and U.S. basic airmail fees per ounce in effect since August 24, 1928. On July 1, 1931, all airmail rates within Canada and the United States were subject to an additional 1¢ war tax fee.

The vignette of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, was from a photograph taken by C. Vandyk Ltd. Carl Vandyk ran the Vandyk company from studios on Gloucester Road and Buckingham Palace Road in London, England, until his death in 1908. He was succeeded by his son, Herbert Vandyk (circa 1880-1943).

In 1964 the company was renamed Bassano and Vandyk Studio. By 1977 it was known as Industrial Photographic. During the tenure of the Vandyks, the company was appointed court photographer and portrait painter.

Unfortunately, the original photograph from which

the vignette was taken is not currently in the files of the Canadian Postal Archives. A reduced version was used to create the bicolor essay shown in Figure 7. Plate 1 was used to print 8,300,000 stamps. There are no known varieties.

As was the norm in those days, a stamp was produced to cover the combined 3¢ domestic rate and 10¢ registration fee for up to \$25 insurance. The 13¢ stamp printed for the IEC showed Britannia with a Phrygian bonnet sitting on a throne surveying the world. The two half globes on each side of Britannia show the British Empire in solid green (Figure 8).

Plates 1 and 2 were used to print 2,000,000 stamps. There are no known varieties.

As mentioned earlier, a 1¢ war tax was added to the 5¢ airmail fee on July 1, 1931. A surcharged 6¢-on-5¢ airmail stamp had been available since February 22, 1932 (Scott C3), but postal officials felt that the IEC delegates would appreciate a commemorative airmail stamp.

Consequently, the BABN reprinted

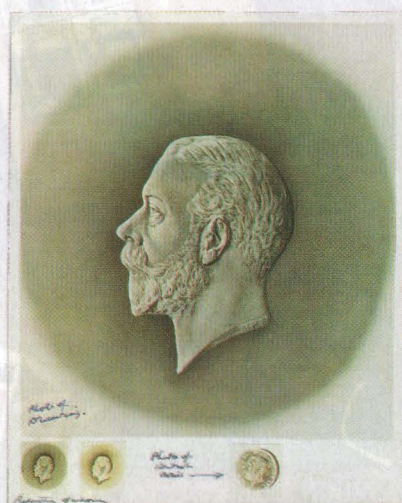


**Figure 4. Sir Edgar Bertram Mackennal, the sculptor of the king's head that graced British coins and from where the design was taken for the 3¢ IEC stamp.**

*Courtesy of the National Library of Australia and the Canadian Postal Archives.*

500,000 copies of the 5¢ airmail stamp of 1930 (Scott C2) and, once the sheets were cut down to post office panes, surcharged the stamps in blue with "6" on both sides of the globe, "Ottawa Conference/1932" and two sets of bars obliterating the original 5¢ denomination. This stamp is Scott C4.

The original 5¢ airmail stamp had a print run of 400,000 copies, and its basic design is an allegory, *Airmail Encircles the Globe*, designed by a staff artist of the BABN. No changes were



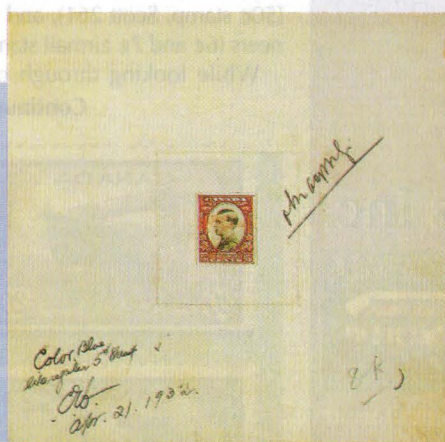
**Figure 5. Photo of the drawing of the king's head (life size and reduced) and of the British coin showing the same king's head.**

*Courtesy of the Canadian Postal Archives.*



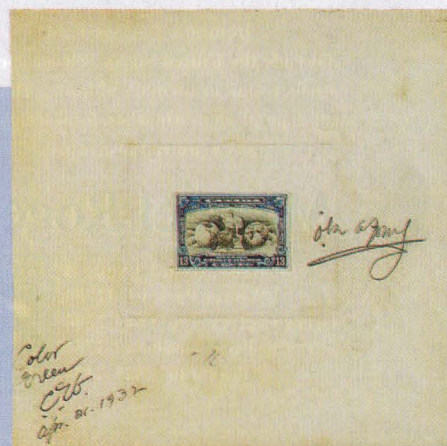
**Figure 6. The broken "E" variety on Scott 192.**

*Courtesy of D. Robin Harris.*



**Figure 7. Bicolor essay for the 5¢. The issued stamp was printed in dull blue.**

*Courtesy of the Canadian Postal Archives.*



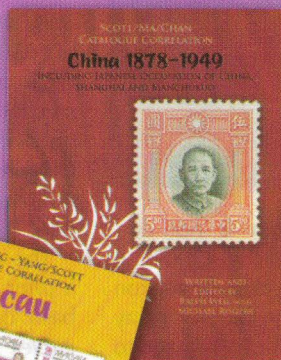
**Figure 8. Bicolor essay for the 13¢. The issued stamp was printed in deep green.**

*Courtesy of the Canadian Postal Archives.*



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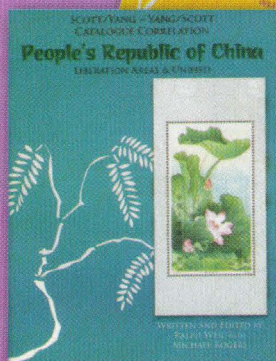
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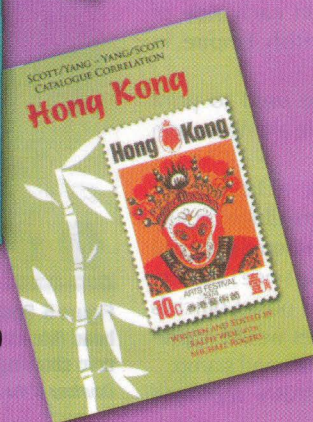
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O CANADA



Figure 9. The reversed "1" variety on the margin of Scott C4.  
Courtesy of John Jamieson, Saskatoon Stamp Centre.

made to the printing plate, and as a result, the "reversed 1" variety found in the margin of the original printing was repeated in this stamp (Figure 9).

The Canadian Post Office, in cooperation with military, naval and civil aviation authorities, conducted a number of experimental flights during the conference. The purpose of the special flights was to show how combining airmail service with fast transatlantic steamers could save time. The experimental flights picked up the mail from the steamers in Bradore Bay on the Straits of Belle Isle and flew it to Ottawa via Montreal.

The 3¢ stamp quickly became so popular with the Canadian public that the Canada Post Office based the next low-value definitive series (Scott 195-200) on McKenna's medallion design.

### Postscript

This is a postscript to my O Canada column "Designs behind Canada's War issue" in the April 2007 issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly*.

In the article, I suggested that some of the high-value definitive stamps of the 1942-43 War issue could be the first Canadian stamps showing living people other than members of the royal family. I made this statement based on the fact that the photographs that are the basis of the stamps were real-life photographs, not staged events.

There were three stamps where living Canadians could possibly be identified. They were the man on the prow of the destroyer (20¢ stamp, Scott 260), the men in the munitions factory (50¢ stamp, Scott 261), and the airman and aeronautics engineers (6¢ and 7¢ airmail stamps, Scott C7 and C8, Figure 10).

While looking through old issues of *The Canadian Phi-*

Continued on page 91



Figure 10. The three people on Scott C7 and C8 are identified.  
Courtesy of the Canadian Postal Archives.



Uhlamoafa  
Gravesite  
A279

2006, Sept. 12 **Perf. 13x13/4**  
626 A279 290fr multi 6.25 6.25

Arms of  
Monsignor Joseph  
Félix Blanc (1872-  
1962)  
A280

2006, Oct. 5 **Engr. Perf. 13/4**  
627 A280 500fr multi 10.50 10.50

Tagaloa,  
Polynesian  
Deity — A281

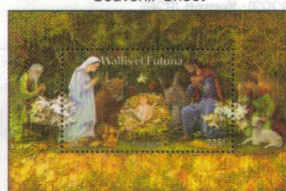
2006, Nov. 8 **Litho. Perf. 13/4x13**  
628 A281 150fr multi 3.50 3.50

Tapas  
A282

No. 629: a, Tapas design (shown). b, Mako à Ono. c, Tausu à Leava. d, Tapas design, diff.

2006, Nov. 8 **Litho. & Engr. Perf. 13x13/4**  
629 Vert. strip of 4 + central label 7.75 7.75  
a-d. A282 85fr Any single 1.90 1.90

Souvenir Sheet



Christmas — A283

2006, Nov. 8 **Litho. Perf. 13**  
630 A283 225fr multi 5.00 5.00

Pio Cardinal  
Taofinu'u (1923-  
2006)  
A284

2007, Jan. 19 **Engr. Perf. 12/4x13**  
631 A284 800fr multi 17.50 17.50

Telemedicine  
A285

2007, Feb. 28 **Litho. Perf. 13/4x13**  
632 A285 5fr multi .20 .20

Audit  
Office,  
Bicent.  
A286

2007, Mar. 19 **Engr. Perf. 13/4**  
633 A286 105fr multi 2.40 2.40

Woman  
A287

2007, Mar. 22 **Litho. Perf. 13**  
634 A287 75fr multi 1.75 1.75

## YEMEN (3/06)

United Nations,  
60th  
Anniv. — A193

Symbols of eight goals for a better Yemen: No. 821, 40r, Pregnant woman and doctor. No. 822, 40r, Woman, infant and doctor. No. 823, 40r, Woman reading book. No. 824, 40r, Mosquito, AIDS ribbon, medicine and bottle. No. 825, Man depositing trash in can, tree, smiling sun. 80r, Goats, hat seller and child. 100r, Woman, man and balance. 120r, Handshake. 130r, UN anniversary emblem.

2005, Oct. 24 **Litho. Perf. 13x12/4**  
821-828 A193 Set of 8 5.50 5.50

Size: 111x83mm

Imperf

829 A193 130r multi 1.50 1.50

No. 829 contains one perforated label lacking a denomination.

Continued from page 36

latelist, I discovered an article by Dr. Edward S. Mercantini (Volume XV, Number 5, September-October 1964, pages 201-204) in which he identifies the individuals on the air-mail stamps. He also identifies Nicholas Morant of Canada's National Film Board as the photographer who, in early spring 1941, took the three photographs that were used in combination to design the stamp.

The photographs were for future publicity shots of "the arrival of the Lockheed Hudson aircraft which was carrying the 'flaming torch,' a symbol of the first Victory Loan of the war." The shorter of the two men on the ground is Philip Massad, the source of the story. Corporal Massad was a Royal Canadian Air Force airframe flight engineer stationed at the No. 2 Advanced Flight Training School at Uplands Air Force Base in Ottawa.

The second man on the ground was Corporal Corbin of Windsor, Ontario, an aero-engine flight engineer.

Massad goes on to say that "no actual pilots were available for the photo in question at the time the photographer arrived," so he and Corbin were outfitted as pilots and the photograph taken. Mercantini identified the pilot climbing into the cockpit of an RCAF North American Harvard Trainer on the stamp as Flight Lieutenant Instructor George Sprague of Ottawa.

Should you wish to read the full Mercantini article, it can be found on the web site of The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada at [www.rpsc.org](http://www.rpsc.org).

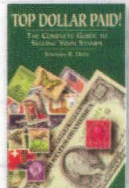
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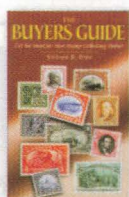
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