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If the changes have any sensible effect, it is probable we may henceforth see Congress less representative of co-operative principles and ideals, and more representative of co-operative financial interests.

ANEURIN WILLIAMS.

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THE INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE AND  
ITS CONGRESS.

It would be quite impossible to deal in this notice with the great masses of information brought together from almost all parts of the world by the International Co-operative Alliance at its first Congress, held from August 19th to 23rd, at the Society of Arts, London. To do so would require at least one whole *ECONOMIC JOURNAL*. A short descriptive notice must suffice here, and those who desire fuller information may be referred to the Alliance itself, at 49 Bedford Street, Strand, and to the volume of proceedings which it will shortly publish.

The Co-operative Congress of 1869, the first of the present series of Annual British Co-operative Congresses, had a distinctly international character, various foreign delegates taking part; and ever since, foreign delegates have from time to time appeared at our congresses, and British delegates at those of continental co-operators. There has not, however, been any permanent organisation specially designed to keep the co-operators of one country in touch with those of another. It is, perhaps, almost as much on this account, as from differences of national character and circumstances, that the development of co-operation has taken such different directions in the different countries; that the store movement, for instance, was until lately almost exclusively British, while the co-operative dairying of Denmark, the agricultural buying and selling societies of France, the co-operative gangs of Italian labourers, and the great co-operative credit—or people's banking—system of the continent, with transactions reaching £150,000,000 per annum, were, and in the main still are, unimitated among us and almost unheard of. Further, it is no doubt due to this mutual ignorance that the trading relations of the co-operators of different countries have been extremely limited.

The idea of forming an International Alliance was very naturally mooted from time to time where co-operators of different countries met; it first took form at the Rochdale Co-operative Congress in 1892, in a decision to form an International Alliance of the friends of co-operative *production and co-partnership*. The late Edward Vansittart Neale took a prominent part in this decision, and his death some months later greatly delayed its execution. Just two years ago, however, at the National Co-operative Festival at the Crystal Palace, a considerable number of foreign delegates attended, and the matter was

further considered and some progress made. About the same time the project was extended from production to all forms of co-operation, and at the Congress just held the Alliance has been definitely created on that basis. It is only fair to record that since the death of Mr. Neale, the credit of carrying forward the idea belongs above all others to Mr. E. O. Greening, and that without the indefatigable labours of Mr. Henry W. Wolff—as widely known abroad as in England in connection with his work on People's Banks—it could scarcely have been realised.

For a considerable time the Co-operative Union of Great Britain held aloof from the proposed alliance, regarding the initiative taken by certain English co-operators as an intrusion upon work properly belonging to them. Happily, however, a few months ago this difficulty was got over, and representatives of the Union joined the executive council.

The Congress which assembled for the first time on Monday morning, August 19th, was a thoroughly representative one: adhesions were announced of most of the important co-operative organisations in the world, while delegates, many of them co-operators of great distinction, were actually present from the chief co-operative countries except Germany. Unfortunately the German co-operative societies were holding their own congresses about the same time, and this, as well as an unfortunate misunderstanding about dates, prevented their sending delegates.

Among the British organisations represented were the Co-operative Union, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Labour Association for Promoting Co-operative Production, the Co-operative Productive Federation, the National Co-operative Festival Society, and a number of distributive and other co-operative societies.

Earl Grey, President of the Alliance, took the chair, and in his inaugural address dwelt on the evil results, economical and moral, of an industrial system which set in conflict the interests of the worker and those of the owner of capital, contrasting with this the increase of wealth and development of character which might be expected under a system where those interests were united. After the inaugural address reports were presented on co-operation in the chief countries. These being taken as read, Mr. Greening read a paper on the Alliance and its work, with special reference to a suitable constitution for it. The Congress thereupon passed a resolution definitely creating the Alliance, and a provisional central committee was appointed, with instructions to consider a suitable constitution and to report to the Congress before its rising. The Congress then considered the question introduced by Mr. H. W. Wolff, of the trading relations between the co-operators of different countries, and appointed a further committee to consult with the former thereon.

In the evening the delegates were received by Earl Grey at the South Kensington Museum.

The second day was devoted to co-operative production, the subject being introduced by the Hon. T. A. Brassey, in a paper dealing with the British co-operative productive societies of the copartnership type. Judge Thomas Hughes was to have presided, but was unable to do so, and in his absence the other survivor of the leading Christian Socialists of 1848, Mr. J. M. Ludlow, took the chair. One resolution was passed urging greater activity in the establishment of copartnership workshops in every country. Another asserted that no satisfactory settlement of the relations of capital and labour is possible without profit-sharing, urged the adoption thereof by ordinary employees, and declared that fidelity to co-operative principle requires all co-operative organisations employing labour to do the same. A third resolution advocated the capitalisation of a part of the worker's share in profit, so as to make him part owner in the capital with which he works.

In the evening there was a reception of the delegates at Lord Brassey's.

The third day was devoted to 'People's Banking,' Mr. Henry W. Wolff presiding and introducing the subject. He dwelt not only on the wonderful growth and soundness of these banks and their invaluable service in putting necessary capital at the disposal of poor men of character, but upon the close connection of economic and moral results in this as in so many cases. In the afternoon the Congress did not sit, an opportunity being given the delegates to attend the Crystal Palace for the opening of the Labour Association's annual exhibition of the products of copartnership workshops. Here they had a striking object lesson in the great variety of goods now produced co-operatively. This year there was added to the British a small international exhibition, where gloves and majolica and ornamental iron work from Italy, wine and corks and honey from France, eggs from Denmark—all of co-operative origin—were to be seen, as well as literature and photographs bearing upon co-operative production abroad. In future years it is probable the international co-operative exhibitions may grow much in importance, especially if the present proposals for trade are found capable of realisation.

Thursday was devoted to the pre-eminently British subject of co-operative supply, Mr. Hardern, of Oldham, taking the chair, and Mr. Tutt, Secretary of the Southern Section of the Co-operative Union, reading the paper. The Congress afterwards passed a resolution congratulating the co-operators of Great Britain on their store movement, especially emphasising the fact that the power of accumulating capital in the hands of the workers affords facilities for the extensive development of industry by the working classes of all countries. Another resolution urged on all co-operative societies the need of educational work; and a third the sharing of profits with employees, the capitalisation of such share of profit as a provision for old age, and the taking of steps to make all employees understand the higher social objects of the movement.

So far the proceedings had been practically unanimous : the first and only breeze was to arise over the constitution of the Alliance. The provisional central committee reported that they considered it neither desirable nor possible to draw up a complete constitution during this Congress, but they submitted certain resolutions embodying its main principles, the lines on which a definite constitution (to be presented to the next Congress) should be based, and the necessary machinery for carrying on the work meanwhile.

The Alliance was to have a central committee, an executive bureau sitting in London, and one or more sections in each country, with a council in each section. Members were to be of two classes, viz. organisations and individual adherents, the latter having but limited powers of voting. The objects of the Alliance were declared to be, to make known the co-operators of each land and their work to the co-operators of all other lands, to elucidate the true principles of co-operation, and to establish international commercial relations. The Alliance would act as far as possible through existing organisations. All this was accepted unanimously, but the first and tenth articles of the report had to be adjourned till next morning. As proposed by the Committee, Article I. read : ' An International Co-operative Alliance is created between the Associations and persons now or hereafter adhering to the work commenced by the late Vansittart Neale and his friends to promote co-operation in all its forms ; taking for basis the principles of property, liberty, and participation in profits.' Article X. made acceptance of the principles of the Alliance a condition of membership. Mr. J. M. Ludlow thereupon moved to omit the words ' taking for basis the principles of property, liberty, and participation in profits,' declaring that property was not a principle, but merely a fact ; that Mr. Neale and his associates had never taken any such principles as the basis of their work, and that for the true principles of co-operation one must go deeper—to morality and Christianity. Others took the line that the proposals would exclude from membership the English wholesale and other bodies, which do not practise profit-sharing. Next morning a compromise proposed by the Committee was accepted. The words objected to by Mr. Ludlow were omitted : the object of the Alliance was declared to be ' to promote co-operation and profit-sharing in all their forms.' The profit-sharing and other resolutions of this Congress were retained as rules for preparing statutes of the Alliance, but would-be adherents were not to be required to accept the principles on applying for membership.

This was disposed of early on Friday, and later the report on international trading relations was brought up, suggesting that no organisation should at present be specially formed for the purpose, but that full information should be collected and distributed as to the products of each country, and existing organisations approached to see how far they can help.

The rest of Friday till 2 p.m. was given to Agricultural Co-operation,

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Professor Henry Sidgwick, in the absence of Lord Reay, presiding. The Hon. Horace Plunkett, M.P., read the opening paper, describing the wonderful growth of agricultural co-operation in Ireland. The latter part of the discussion on this subject had to be adjourned till the evening, at the Crystal Palace, where the delegates were due for the opening of the annual Co-operative Flower Show—the largest flower show, it is believed, in the world—and some for the annual meeting of the Labour Association.

On Saturday the foreign delegates were again at the Crystal Palace taking part in the National Co-operative Festival. Over thirty-six thousand visitors were present—a record attendance—the greater part being co-operators from the provinces. The great choir alone included six thousand persons, and our visitors saw a sight unequalled as yet in any country; but which, we were told, has inspired a French co-operator, who visited it some years ago, with the determination to establish a similar festival of co-operators in France.

For the present the central committee of the Alliance consists of the following:—Earl Grey (President), Miss Tournier, and Messrs. J. C. Gray, E. O. Greening, Aneurin Williams, and H. W. Wolff (Great Britain); E. de Boyve, Kergall, and Charles Robert (France); Dr. Crüger (Germany); Enea Cavaliere and Luigi Luzzatti (Italy); d'Andrimont and Micha (Belgium); and N. O. Nelson (United States). Representatives of other countries will be added, as it was not found practicable to make a complete committee in the hurry of the Congress.

ANEURIN WILLIAMS

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#### THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION OF FRANCE FOR THE PRACTICAL STUDY OF SOCIAL QUESTIONS.<sup>1</sup>

THIS Association was founded by some young ministers seven years ago. The number of members is now about 600; two thirds of them clerical, one third lay, including some ladies. The Association meets every year in a different French town. It is represented by a quarterly review, *le Christianisme pratique*, edited by M. Chastand, minister at Vals les Bains. The present president is M. de Boyve, one of the leaders of co-operation in France; well known also to English co-operators as having taken part in most of their congresses of late years. The Vice-President of the Association is the writer of these lines.

The papers read at each meeting are published in a volume. The current number is the sixth; the two most important papers which it contains are that on *Alcoholism* by M. Bianquis, minister at Rouen, and that on *Collectivist Expropriation* by the present writer.

*Alcoholism* was not a question in France twenty-five years ago.

<sup>1</sup> *Travaux du Congrès de Montauban; 6ème Assemblée de l'Association protestante pour l'étude des questions sociales.* Paris: Fischbacher. 1895.