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THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE.

BY LUIGI LUZZATTI.

As a result of the initiative by the King of Italy in favor of the foundation of a World's Agricultural Institute, the representatives of all the nations, both great and small, who met at the Conference held in Rome in May of last year, unanimously recognized the utility of such an institution.

The International Institute of Agriculture is to embody in a new form the spirit of the *Pax Romana*, no longer to be enforced by the victor at the point of the sword, but to be obtained as the result of the triumph of science and of intelligent agricultural labor. The delegates of all the Governments at the diplomatic Conference in Rome unanimously endorsed this great project.

The general, uniform and constant collection and immediate dissemination of statistical information; the prevention of the diseases of plants and animals; the stipulations of international agreements having a bearing on agricultural production and distribution were among the themes discussed at the Conference, and the conclusion was reached that all these problems, essentially international as they are, could best be dealt with by an International Institute of Agriculture.

The scandals arising from the manipulation of the prices of the staples of agriculture, and the circulation of false news as to the prospects of crops with the intent to perturb prices artificially, compel both producing and consuming nations to realize the need for trustworthy statistical information—information which shall be received by all the world as authoritative. And, while conflicting interests might prevent one nation from accepting as authoritative and final the information furnished by another nation, it would be otherwise in the case of statements

made by the International Institute of Agriculture, for the duty of gathering and issuing the information would be in the hands of the world's statistical experts, and it would be discharged under the auspices of the high representatives of the various nations. There is yet another and a stronger reason why the information furnished by the Institute would be more acceptable than any now accessible, and that is because a world's summary is absolutely necessary to the establishment of a just world's price. No such world's summary can now be had, for the simple reason that, among the most important producing nations at the present time, there are no daily or weekly or monthly reports of facts as to growing crops, and whatever information is had from those countries at present is gathered by private persons. But would the International Institute of Agriculture assure greater possibility of obtaining the facts than exists now? The answer is, "Decidedly so," as may be confidently inferred from the list of nations that have already signed adherence to the Institute. We see from this list that nations which have heretofore kept no tally of the growing crops and of other necessary facts were among the first to support the project. This is equivalent to a tacit agreement between the nations that accurate, timely and necessary information shall be furnished by them to the Institute. How else could it carry on its work?

The importance of all this becomes manifest as soon as we realize that the information here spoken of is the main factor which determines the prices of agricultural staples, and that the status of the price determines the earning power of the capital and labor employed on the farm and in the factory, and, last but not least, that it affects the welfare of all the consumers.

It is admitted that at the start there will be many difficulties to overcome, but, with the help of scientific knowledge and the requisite financial means, all these may be conquered.

Of its efficacy, when established, it may be said that, as the general principles at the basis of civil and commercial law tend to become uniform, the action of the proposed Institute would hasten the solution of problems which can be solved only through the association of scientific knowledge with legislative power. This fact being generally recognized at the Conference, the proposal did not encounter opposition, at least in theory. The immensity of the undertaking alone caused hesitation; but, like all

sound undertakings, it will have its own organic evolution and the consecration which time and experience will confer on it.

A point upon which a difference of opinion arose at the Conference—a difference which cannot be a matter of surprise—was the question of the organization of the new Institute and its practical activities.

In the rough outline of the original proposal, there is mention of an Agricultural Parliament, but these words do not appear in the King's letter to his Prime Minister. However, the idea is there none the less; for the King, in inviting the several Governments to the great Conference, proposed that in the Institute the vital forces of agriculture should be represented, on the one hand, by the delegates from the nation, and, on the other hand, by delegates from the agricultural associations. An Agricultural Parliament, it is implied, would sit in Rome, composed of two houses—one elected by and representing the farming world; the other, a counterpart of the Senate, composed of delegates appointed by the Governments.

The Germans—notably Haas, the working leader of German rural cooperation,—the Austrians, the Hungarians, and possibly the Swiss, the Dutch, the Belgians and the Danes are in favor of the two-houses scheme. Or, should the two houses seem to imply needless complication (which I do not think would be the case), they wish, at all events, that agriculture should not be represented by Government delegates exclusively, but that a voice should be given also to the agricultural associations.

The Germans attach much importance to individualism, as revealed in the elective affinities of associations and cooperative societies; and they wish to see the representative members of these associations admitted to the Institute as a counterbalance and corrective or stimulant to the Government delegates. And, in this connection, it may be noted that, while in no country does the State do more or do better than in Germany, there is no country in which free associations exercise a more active or more salutary influence upon affairs, in conjunction with governmental forces.

Other countries opposed this elective principle, adducing arguments worthy of consideration, and affirming that the technical intervention of the several Governments would be more efficacious and more uniform; the Governments could then see about coming

to an agreement with their respective associations. When all this is taken into consideration, it will not seem strange that the essential point of the two houses was left undecided by the Conference, and that mainly with a view to the preservation of unanimity.

That the two-houses idea will, however, in due time be evolved is certain; for it is clear that the agricultural associations will bring pressure to bear on their respective Governments, and will demand admission for their representatives to the new Institute. This is to be desired, for, if the farmers once realize the salutary efficacy of the Institute, the all-powerful law of self-interest will urge them to agitate for the right of participation in the labors of the Institute; otherwise, it could be implied that the Institute had only an academic value, and such an implication would be disastrous to its success. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that, in process of time, the Governments, through their representatives at the Institute, will reconsider this question. When the agricultural classes unanimously express themselves in favor of the principle of the dual representation, their wishes will be respected.

The other point on which a difference of opinion arose is a yet more delicate one, and may be summarized in the following terms: Ought the International Institute of Agriculture to promote, not only the exchange of ideas, but also the exchange of commodities and of traffic? Shall it merely be consultative, deliberative and advisory, or shall it have power to do, to act? Here, again, different tendencies became manifest at the Conference. The delegates who favored the principle of dual representation were inclined to pass from words to deeds; on the other hand, those who favored exclusively official representation did not wish the Institute to venture beyond studies leading on to legislative reforms.

An example may make this matter clearer.

The importance to which rural cooperation has attained today is well known. It is a power both for transformation and salvation. The valuable studies and experiences of Sir Horace Plunkett clearly show that rural cooperation has done for Ireland what legislation, from the first bold reforms promoted by Gladstone down to those of the present day, has been powerless to accomplish. Denmark owes to rural cooperation the change

from poverty to a condition of general and equitable prosperity. Rural cooperation has freed whole districts from the most tenacious and voracious forms of usury. Rural cooperation has up-built the moral and economic status of the small farmer, in whom is embodied the choicest and soundest type of a healthy democracy. Now, as rural cooperation extends its operations everywhere, why should not its representatives, under the auspices of the International Institute, (which would offer them the Tent of Hospitality), meet at stated times, in convention at Rome, with a view to taking advantage of the best results of the world's experience?

Such a world-wide alliance of cooperative societies would do more than all the laws on the statute-books to prevent the adulteration of foods, the formation of trusts, and artificial speculation in the staples of agriculture. At the Conference, Haas and myself, representing Germany and Italy, proposed and supported this scheme of international cooperation, which won the approval of the Danish, Dutch, and other delegations. But the time was not yet ripe for such a measure; and, so as not to endanger the success of the Conference, it was kept in reserve for the future decision of the Institute, and was not exposed to the chance of an unfavorable vote.

If the Institute does not wish to lose its most vital elements, it will have to place itself at the head of the movement. Everywhere rural cooperation implies the transformation and crystallization of the choicest labor into the most legitimate kind of capital, a capital which is fruitful and should be inviolable, inasmuch as both the heart and mind of the least of the producers contribute to its formation. It is the surest antidote to, the safest buttress against, Socialism. The International Institute of Agriculture will receive its real patent of nobility from rural cooperation, and this the King of Italy knew and felt when, in his announcement of the plan, he pointed out world-wide cooperation as the chief aim of the new Institute. Enlightened Monarchs feel more keenly than other people their elective affinity to re-deemed agrarian labor!

Another point. To-day, more than ever, European and Chinese emigration has become a difficult and anxious problem. North and South America and Australia are the chief countries into which emigrants pour. In the crucible of the United States,

the residuum of the European and Asiatic races is melted down. These homeless wanderers from Europe and Asia, driven by poverty and by the spirit of adventure to emigrate, have already been the objects of legislation, both for and against them. In Italy, we have the emigration laws, the Emigration Bureaus, Committees formed for the protection of these unfortunate people; the United States, on its side, is anxious to sift out and select, by means of educational and money tests, the foreigners who seek its shores; whilst Australia openly tries to thrust them out as so many intruders, who perturb the labor-market and lower the wage rate. There is a wish to protect home labor as home industries are protected.

Now what more important or valuable task could the new Institute undertake than that of aiding the solution of the emigration problem? In its world-wide and humanitarian aspect, it ought to reflect all phases of this problem, and in its philanthropic aspect it ought to promote a whole series of measures for the protection of emigrants in all parts of the world. It should stand up for the protection of the worker, no matter whence he comes or whither he is going. On what a splendid network of new institutions the Twentieth Century might set her seal!

As, through the International Institute of Agriculture, the correct prices of the staples of agriculture would be arrived at, so, by means of this new and international Labor Exchange, information would be constantly furnished as to the places where there was either excess or lack of labor. How many blessings such a work would earn, how many tears it would dry, how many economic crimes it would be the means of abolishing (witness the lynching of foreign workers), how actively it could promote economic and social prosperity! I am sure that, when the International Institute of Agriculture achieves this end, when it can provide for the universal protection of the emigrant who will no longer feel himself an alien in any land (for, as the result of this just and liberal protection, he will find himself at home all over the world), I am sure that in this the King of Italy will feel that his initiative has achieved its most beneficent results.

Evidently, the new Institute will have no lack of great works to accomplish wherewith to stimulate its activity; and, although the German delegates and some of the Italian delegates (to wit, Professor Pantaleoni and myself) would have wished the Rome

Conference to break loose from the fetters of diplomatic etiquette, and to place these new ideals under the co-direction of the national delegates and of the farmers' organizations, nevertheless, the seed which was then sown will bear fruit in the future. The essential thing is that the International Institute is now substantially in existence, that before long it will be in working order in Rome, as a legally constituted body. The pressure of the public opinion of the agricultural world, as expressed at its international congresses, will do the rest.

At the last meeting of the Committee of the International Federation of Master Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers, held in Paris, representing a large proportion of the world's cotton industry, an important resolution was passed to express the hope that the Institute may get to work as soon as possible, so as to protect one of the chief of the world's industries, that which clothes the prince and the peasant, old and young, male and female, all over the world.

Nowadays, owing to speculation and manipulation of the markets, the cotton industry, formerly one of the most stable, is becoming one of the most risky. Speculation on the cotton exchanges, along with the uncertainty always prevalent as to the real conditions of the production of cotton, has led all over the world to a display of feverish activity with a view to finding new fields for cotton-plantations. Every nation is anxious to free itself from these risks and speculations, by obtaining its own territory for the cultivation of cotton. Even Italy is now trying to obtain a cotton region in Benadir. Thus, the penalty for the American cotton-grower, which the unhealthy speculation will have brought about, promises to be in a permanently lowered world's price through stimulated production of increased volume.

Hence, it is clear that it is in the interest of the United States to foster the new International Institute of Agriculture, and to work for it with a view to freeing the world of all forms of false and artificial manipulation of the prices of cotton. The United States, as a nation, will be responsible should it not work to strengthen this new Institute, which will free the *bona fide* production and consumption of the world from this blot of manipulation. As a nation, the United States was responsible for slavery, and it freed itself of slavery by the most glorious of wars; as a

nation, it is now responsible for all the swindles in prices which are carried on under the shade of its otherwise spotless flag.

In conclusion, the Institute promoted by the King of Italy is an altar sacred to agrarian and social peace, the parents of political peace. The fiercest struggles which the world still has to fear are those due to the diversity of economic interests. To what other cause can we attribute the divergence prevailing between two of the mightiest and wisest nations of the world, England and Germany, which along with the United States, France and Italy, are the great beacon-lights of civilization? It is all very well to spread the economic precepts of Adam Smith, Cobden, and Bastiat; to preach that the interests of all states are at bottom identical; that the prosperity of one cannot spell the ruin of the other. It is all very well to state that the national alliance of consumers improves that of the producers; to prove that there is room for all in this world, still so full of buried wealth, of dormant activities; the demoniacal instinct of human cupidity will, none the less, awake at certain hours in human history, and will drive the nations on to war. Now, the only hope is to oppose to these dire tendencies powerful and solid economic institutions, which will counteract the bad by the good instincts, the unwholesome interests by the wholesome, the divergent forces by the natural alliance of consumers and producers. A popular free-trade treaty would be of no practical value for such a purpose. Our age, which is so saturated with economic science, has gone back all along the line to the most rigid protectionism, without even being able to plead the ignorance of the Middle Ages, to which the laws of political economy were unknown. Should Chamberlain succeed in the future in making protection triumph in England also, there will no longer be a single corner in the whole world where the economic doctrine of free trade will be respected and observed. Economic peace will never be obtained through the agency of doctrinaire political economy. New institutions, essentially international in character, must be created, which, whilst refraining from stirring up irritating tariff questions, will find other means for initiating the nations in the pursuit of economic harmony.

When the Institute promoted by the King of Italy gets to work, then the obvious, daily and ever-renewed advantages which it will yield will speak to the heart of the nations. Manufacturers

will have the certainty that their raw material will be free from unfair values and from unnecessary fluctuations, and those who eat their daily bread in the sweat of their brows, and night and morning pray to God to vouchsafe them their crust, will know that they are not paying tribute to the manipulators of corners, to the men who with impunity starve the suffering and toiling masses. The emigrants who leave their mother country, which cannot feed them, will find other hospitable shores, and wherever they go they will find themselves under the beneficent influence of a thoughtful guardian. And the small farmers and peasants, united in rural federations, will enjoy a common prosperity insured to the humble, which will make itself felt in all parts of the world. From the ranks of these small farmers, redeemed by cooperation, unified in spirit by the Institute promoted by the King of Italy, will arise a powerful voice, a voice which will bridle the spirit of evil, and opposing it by the force of harmonious interests will impose Peace on all the world, and thus maintain it.

As is shown by the letter in which he invited all the Governments of the world to this common symposium, the King of Italy felt this, and gave expression to the idea in few and measured words. Would that this great vision may become a splendid reality!

Were the exalted head of the United States also to take under his protection the programme laid down by the King of Italy, such an alliance between the mighty Republic and the Kingdom which has Rome for capital might yield us the most notable miracle of modern civilization. The day on which the United States of America devotes to the cause of universal economic justice the enormous power which it has till now devoted to developing the resources of its own lands, its mines, its manufactures; the day on which a loftier thought—that of the union of all the nations for a wider, fuller life—shall replace in the mind of America the idea of struggling for national wealth, in which it has won for itself the foremost place, that day will usher in a new social era. And a mystic and solemn significance would attach to the fact if the Capitols of Rome and Washington were to contribute to the hastening of that day.

LUIGI LUZZATTI.