First International Congress of Landworkers' Unions affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions
(Amsterdam 17-19 August 1920)

I. Preparation of the Congress.

In the early part of the year, the Nederlandsche Bond van Arbeiders in het Landbouw-, Tuinbouw-, en Zuivelbedrijf (1) sent a circular to certain of the central organisations of Agricultural Workers proposing to hold an international congress at Amsterdam on August 17, 1920. This invitation, only extended to unions holding the principles professed by the International Federation of Trade Unions.

Mr. P. Hiemstra, the secretary of the Nederlandsche Bond van Arbeiders in het Landbouw-, Tuinbouw-, en Zuivelbedrijf, went himself to the Congress of the National Federation of Agricultural Workers of France, held at Limoge from the 4th to the 6th April, 1920, for the purpose of repeating the


In Holland there are three other Associations of Landworkers, one forming part of the Catholic Trades Union movement, one of the Christian (Protestant) Trades Union movement, and the third composed of Syndicalists.


invitation of his Union to the French Agricultural Workers.

The proposal of the Nederlandsche Bon van Arbeiders in het Landbouw-, Tuinbouw-, en Zuivelbedrijf was accepted, and it was decided to hold the international congress at Amsterdam on Tuesday the 17th, Wednesday the 18th and Thursday the 19th of August, 1920, with the following agenda:

2. Rules and contributions.
3. Discussion of various motions.
4. Selection of the country in which the head-quarters of the International Federation will be established.
5. Election of an International Secretary.
6. Election of four members who, together with the secretary, will form the Executive Committee.

Following the despatch of this agenda, the Central Rural Organisations of the Danish, French, German, and Dutch speaking countries sent in various suggestions for discussions under item No 3.

Both the Danish Central Organisation and the French Central Organisation proposed the discussion of the question of free interchange of members between the various Central Organisations to be affiliated to the projected Federation. The same Central Organisations suggested the discussion of the institution of an International Office which would collect any information of interest to agricultural workers, and give financial assistance to national unions on strike and in need of money. This International Office would also aim at the prevention of emigration of agricultural workers into countries or districts affected by agricultural strikes.

The Danish Central Organisation and also the German speaking Central Organisations asked that the Congress should discuss the possibility of preventing employers from hiring foreign workers with the object of preventing a rise of wages in agriculture.

The French Central Organisation, in addition to the above-mentioned motions, proposed the discussion of means of protecting land workers against lock-outs and trusts and of fixing a legal minimum wage for agricultural workers.

The Austrian Central Organisation proposed for discussion a nationalisation of land and forests which would be effected without detriment to public interests or agricultural production. This Central Organisation also proposed that the Congress should make an exact classification of the different classes of workers coming under the heading of landworkers, dividing them into agricultural workers, forest workers, gardeners and sawyers.

Finally the Dutch Central Organisation proposed that the Congress should discuss and pronounce on the seven items on the agenda of the third meeting of the International Labour Conference of the League of Nations, to be held at Geneva on the 4th of April 1921, namely:
Adaptation of the Washington decisions to Agricultural Labour:
1. for the limitation of hours of work to eight in the day
   and forty-eight in the week.
2. Concerning unemployment.
3. Concerning the employment of women and children.
5. Hygiene in relation to the lodging and the sleeping
   accommodation of land workers.
6. Securing to land workers the right to form unions and
   to strike.
7. Protection of land workers in case of accident, sickness,
   disablement and old age.

II. THE AMSTERDAM CONGRESS.

(a) The Organisations represented.

The sessions of the Congress were held in a hall in the
Café Parkzicht. The following table shows the Central Organisations
represented, the names of their delegates, and their
membership as declared by their delegates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of Union</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Delegates</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Federazione Nazionale dei Lavoratori della Terra.</td>
<td>845,635</td>
<td>Argentina Altobelli</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Deutscher Landarbeiterverband</td>
<td>780,000</td>
<td>Georg Schmidt, Fritz Faass, Emil Woldt</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nat. Agricultural Labourers' &amp; Rural Workers' Union</td>
<td>180,000</td>
<td>W. R. Smith, W. Holmes, R. B. Walker</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Workers' Union</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>J. Doy, George Dallas, Arthur Ashby</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Landarbeiterverband Deutsch-Oesterreich</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>Hans Hammerstorfer</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Landarbejderforbundet i Danmark</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Oscar Lewinson, Lorentz Petersen, Peder Hedehol, Marius Olsen</td>
<td>Danish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Scottish Farm Servants' Union</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Joseph Duncan</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Svenska Lantarbetareforbundet</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>Albin Hansson</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hollandsche Landarbeidersbond</td>
<td>15,500</td>
<td>P. Hiemstra, J. Hilgenga, D. v. d. Laan</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Belgische Landarbeidersbond</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>Victor Planteefève, Camille Mostaerd</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Czecho-Slovak, Polish and French Central Rural Organisations sent assurances of their support but regretted their inability to take part in the Congress, the first two on account of difficulties in procuring the necessary passports, and the third for financial reasons. The General Federation of Labour of Spain wrote explaining that the movement among Spanish land workers was not yet sufficiently developed to justify the sending of a special delegate.

Table No II groups the above-mentioned Central Organisations according to the language of their members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Number of Organisations</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>No. of Delegates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>German : Germany</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>780,000</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td></td>
<td>831,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English: Gt. Britain</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>180,000</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>150,000</td>
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<td>260,000</td>
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<td>30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>French : Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15,500</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>845,635</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A very large majority of the delegates of these Rural Central Organisations were Trade Union officials. Among the rare exceptions may be mentioned Mr. Arthur Ashby, delegate of the Workers' Union and professor of Rural Economy at Oxford University.

9th September, 1920.

(b) The Work of the Congress

1. Opening:

The Congress was opened by Mr P. Hiemstra, General Secretary of the Nederlandsche Bond van Arbeiders in het Landbouw-, Tuinbouw-, en Zuivelbedrijf. After welcoming the delegates present he invited the representative of the International Federation of Trade Unions, Mr J. Oudegeest, and the delegate of the International Labour Office, Mr. di Palma-Castiglione, to speak.

Mr. Oudegeest emphasised the importance of the fact that, for the first time, delegates representing that class of workers
which, throughout history, had always been the most despised and the least protected, were now called together in a Congress. Speaking of the present time he expressed the hope that agricultural workers throughout the world would be able to unite with the industrial workers to meet the menace of fresh wars and prevent them.

Dr. di Palma-Castiglione stated that the International Labour Office had sent a delegate for the purpose of hearing the opinion of the Congress on the seven points (already quoted) which will form the basis of discussion and decision at the third meeting of the International Labour Conference, called for the spring of next year.

On the motion of Madame Argentina Altobelli a general resolution against war was passed.

2. Establishment of an International Federation.

This subject did not give rise to any debate. All the delegates were in agreement as to the necessity of forming an international institution which should include all national Agricultural Trade Unions with similar objectives.

3. Regulations of the Federation.

The points which gave rise to debate during the examination and discussion of the regulations of the International Federation were the following:—

(a) Principle of affiliation to the Federation. — Mr. Hiemstra proposed that only the unions accepting the programme of the International Federation of the Trade Unions should be admitted. Plantefève, in a first motion, proposed to admit only the Unions affiliated to the National Federations of their countries. In a second motion, supported by Hedebol, he proposed that no National Unions should be admitted unless the opinion of the National Federation of the country to which the Union in question belonged were first heard.

Madame Altobelli first proposed that only the National Unions affiliated to the Central Organisation attached to the International Federation of Trade Unions should be admitted, but afterwards supported the motion of Plantefève and Hedebol.

Hiemstra declared that he was in favour of admitting to the Federation any National Union provided that on becoming affiliated to the Federation such Union undertook to join the Central Organisation of its own country within a period of not more than two years.

Faas, on behalf of the Germans, declared that he was absolutely against the admission of unions of a communist or syndicalist character. He declared himself opposed to Hiemstra's motion and supported that of Hedebol and Plantefève.

Duncan proposed admitting Unions with the same programme and aims as the National Central Organisation, even if they were not affiliated to it.
Finally Hiemstra proposed to admit only the Organisations which accepted the principles of the International Federation of Trade Unions. In the case of a request for admission from more than one organisation from the same country, the executive committee of the Federation should obtain the consent of the union or unions of the nation in question which had already been admitted.

(b) Contributions. — It was decided that for the purpose of meeting the expenses of the Federation up to the end of the year 1920, the sums to be paid by the different organisations should be the following:

1. Federazione Nazionale dei Lavoratori della Terra 15,000 lires
2. Deutscher Landarbeiterverband 11,700 marks
3. Landarbeiterverband Deutsch-Oesterreich 900 crowns
4. National Agricultural Labourers' and Rural Workers' Union £ 135
5. The Workers' Union £ 112.10s.
6. Scottish Farm Servants' Union £ 22.10s.
7. Hollandsche Landarbeidersbond 145 florins
8. Fédération des Travailleurs de la Terre de la Belgique 36 francs
9. Fédération Nationale des Travailleurs de l'Agriculture 540 francs
10. Landarbejderforbundet i Danmark 450 crowns
11. Svenska Lantarbetareförbundet 240 crowns

Total converted into Dutch currency at the average rate of exchange 6,431 florins

4. Selection of the Country in which the head-quarters of the International Federation will be established.

The German speaking delegates, supported by the Belgian delegate Camille Mostaerd, proposed Amsterdam; Madame Altobelli proposed Italy but did not press her motion. It was decided to establish the headquarters at Amsterdam.

5. Election of an International Secretary.

Hiemstra was elected General Secretary of the International Federation of Land Workers.

6. Election of 4 Members who, together with the General Secretary, will constitute the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Land Workers.

Faas proposed that the executive committee should be chosen from the delegates of the nationalities represented by the following languages: British, German, Italian, Scandinavian.

Planteffe (French-speaking delegate) expressed his deep regret that no French-speaking delegate had been proposed.

(1) The par value of this sum is about £514.10s.
The sole distinction which has a positive basis is that of language and not that of country. The Executive Committee should be composed of 10 members representing the following languages:

- **German**: Germany, Austria.
- **English**: Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, United States.
- **French**: France, Belgium, Luxembourg.
- **Spanish**: Spain, Central America, South America.
- **Portuguese**: Portugal, Brazil.
- **Dutch**: Holland.
- **Scandinavian**: Denmark, Sweden, Norway.
- **Italian**: Italy, Canton of Tessin (Switzerland).
- **Slavonic**: Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Serbia.
- **Other languages**: Other countries.

He considered that for the moment it would be sufficient to elect seven members speaking Dutch, English, French, German, Italian and Scandinavian, and to leave the other places vacant for representatives of workers of countries which had not yet formed organisations.

Plantefève also considered that in any case the French speaking workers should be represented on the Executive Committee; but when the delegates present promised that the discussion would be continued at the next International Congress, he did not insist on this motion.

The Executive Committee was composed as follows: Madame Argentina Altobelli; P. Hiemstra, General Secretary; Oscar Lewinson; Georg Schmidt; W. R. Smith.

### 7. Discussion of Various Motions.

**Nationalisation.** — Faas declared himself in principle in favour of nationalisation but for the moment, as a German citizen, he was opposed to it on account of the special situation of his country consequent on the war and the conditions imposed upon Germany by the victors.

Hiemstra moved the following motion which was carried without opposition:

"The Conference, considering that the land should be restored to the people and that it should be worked in their interests, relies on the organisations affiliated to the International Landworkers' Federation to support energetically all efforts tending to assure these objects."

After the vote on this motion had been taken, Duncan asked that the Congress should decide on the attitude of the affiliated trade unions towards the social and legislative movements which exist in each country in favour of the creation of small holdings. He stated that, from the point of view of the social interests of the workers, the consequences of the formation of small holdings in Scotland were disastrous. The workers and their families, lured on by a hope of personal
gain, worked like beasts of burden to the detriment of their
development as men and citizens.

Hiemstra declared that the question brought forward by
Duncan was not included in the agenda, inasmuch as it refer-
red to rural organisation, a subject which it was not
proposed to consider at this Congress. All the same he
wished to remark that in Holland the experiment of small
holdings had produced the same results as in Scotland.

Peter Hedebol, Secretary of the General Federation of
Denmark, declared that he had voted in favour of the motion
on nationalisation, because, in his opinion, it contained a
simple affirmation of principle, but he did not believe that at
that Congress they had the time or the means for discussing
exhaustively the question of the forms of rural organisation.
He said that in Denmark they supported the system of small
holdings, even in the event of the nationalisation of the land
and the abolition of private ownership.

He stated that the programme of the Socialist Party in
Denmark was professedly in favour of small holdings yet
favoured at the same time the nationalisation of land. In
Denmark production had been increased by the organisation
of small holdings. He recognised that this organisation
was possible in Denmark solely because that country had
specialised in certain agricultural products, which it exchang-
ed for agricultural products coming from other countries.
In Denmark the small holdings are grouped in co-operative
societies which supply them with everything they need, from
manures to horses, and which undertake every kind of busi-
ness, even to the packing of eggs.

In reply to W. R. Smith, Hedebol said that in his opinion
the small holders in Denmark did not work longer than other
wage-earners, except in the harvest season and when there
was fear of rain.

In reply to the delegate of the International Labour Office,
Hedebol said that the statements which he had made referred
exclusively to Denmark and not to the other Scandinavian
countries, the exact conditions of which he did know. Fur-
thermore, the conditions of the wives and children of Danish
small holders, were, in his opinion, fairly good. While
there was much exploitation of child labour on the large
estates, the children who were employed on small holdings had
time for education and amusement. He could not give
precise data, and he thought that the subject was too difficult
to be dealt with at this Congress.

After a few remarks by Madame Altobelli and W. R. Smith,
the following motion was proposed by Duncan and approved:

"That the Executive Committee be instructed to obtain from
the affiliated organisations information relating to the agricultural
systems in each country, and that the affiliated organisations be
requested to submit proposals for the nationalisation of agriculture
in their countries."
Hiemstra judged it essential that the Congress should give its opinion on every item of the Agenda of the Third Meeting of the International Labour Conference. As regarded the regulation of the hours of work in agriculture, he said that he supported the demand made by the International Landworkers’ Federation for a maximum average working day of eight hours, but that a nine-hour day should be permitted in summer, a correspondingly shorter winter day compensating for it. As a temporary measure two hours’ extra work per day during the harvest might be allowed. The limitation of the hours of work should also apply to stockmen and milkers. Finally the English week (five full working days and half day on Saturdays) should be demanded except during the harvest season.

For women, a weekly half-holiday should be demanded even during the harvest season, to enable them to do housework in preparation for Sunday. As regarded children, the demand should be for the total prohibition of any kind of work for all who were under fourteen years of age, including the children of small holders. The International Landworkers’ Federation should protect children even against their parents. As regarded technical instruction, lads should be compelled to attend schools even after they had gone to work.

With reference to hygiene, the programme of the International Landworkers’ Federation should, according to Hiemstra, limit itself to a demand for dwellings fit for human habitation for seasonal workers and farm servants, and a general improvement in housing conditions in the rural districts of each country: it should insist also on the legal abolition, or at least, the regulation of the “tied cottage” system.

Hiemstra declared finally that, as regarded social insurance, the International Landworkers’ Federation should demand its application to all land workers.

Duncan proposed that detailed discussion on the different points of the agenda of the third session of the International Labour Conference should be suspended and that the executive committee of the International Federation of Land workers should be charged to examine each subject in detail.

Hiemstra declared that the International Landworkers’ Federation demanded absolute equality between women working in industry, and women working on the land, and the prohibition of the employment of women and of youths under eighteen on night work. Finally he approved of Duncan’s proposal.

Madame Altobelli was in agreement with Duncan, but said that it was necessary to formulate the principle that
all social legislation voted for industrial workers should be applied to land workers.

Faas agreed, but wished to observe that in the German Empire, the social laws had since the Revolution been applied both to land workers and to factory workers. As regarded the limitation of hours of work in Germany, Faas declared that the delegates of the German land workers must be prudent in their declarations, because the limitation of hours might cause such a diminution of production as Germany could not afford in view of the conditions imposed at Spa.

Hedebol was in agreement with Duncan, but he thought that the executive committee should formulate a maximum and not a minimum programme.

Hiemstra demanded that the Congress should give a definite mandate to the executive committee, instructing it as to whether or not it should take steps to affirm the principle of the eight-hour day or to obtain that this principle should be applied. He himself thought that the Congress should come to a decision on the principle of the eight-hour day, leaving to the executive committee the duty of preparing a scheme for its application.

Duncan asked that the Congress should pass a motion for the application to land workers of all social legislation, and should refer to the executive committee the consideration of the details of the agenda of the third session of the International Labour Conference.

Madame Altobelli asked for a vote on the principle of the eight-hour day for land workers.

The proposal was accepted unanimously.

The following motions were then approved:

"All the principles applicable to industry are applicable to workers on the land. The eight-hour day is adopted in principle, the other questions are referred to the Executive Committee." (Schmidt.)

"That this Conference, taking into consideration the agenda for the Conference to be held under the auspices of the International Labour Office at Geneva, is of opinion that laws applying to industrial workers should apply also to agricultural workers. It therefore declares itself in favour of the following measures:

1. Introduction of an 8-hour working day and a Saturday afternoon holiday.
2. Absolute prohibition of the labour of children under 14 years of age.
3. Prohibition of night-work for women and young persons.
4. Improved technical instruction of young workers.
5. Establishment of good housing accommodation for workers living in and for non-resident workers.
6. Fundamental improvement of the conditions of land-workers." (Hiemstra.)
Walker, before the Congress adjourned, obtained its approval of the following motion:

"That this Congress requests the executive committee to take immediately the steps necessary to ensure that the interests of the land workers are represented at the Geneva Conference of 1921."


The closing speech was made by Madame Altobelli, who declared that the International Landworkers’ Federation should keep in view the following objects:

"The reinforcement of land workers’ organisations in countries where they are weak, or do not exist;

"The nationalisation of the land;

"Opposition to all war."

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STUDIES AND REPORTS

already issued:

(1) — In English and in French.

Coal production in the Ruhr district. Enquiry by the International Labour Office, end of May 1920. (Series B No. 1, issued on September 1st 1920.)

Staff regulation of the French railways. (Series D No. 1, issued on September 8th 1920.)

The consumers' co-operative societies in 1919. Denmark and Sweden. (Series H No. 1, issued on September 8th 1920.)

The agreement between the Spanish workers' organisations. (Series A No. 1, issued on September 24th 1920.)

Seventh Congress of the Belgian co-operative office. (Series H No. 2, issued on September 25th 1920.)

The dispute in the metal industry in Italy. — Trade Union Control of the industry. (Series A No. 2, issued on September 24th 1920.)

Annual meeting of the trades union congress 1920. (Series A No. 3, issued on October 4th 1920.)

Papers relating to Schemes of International Organisation for the distribution of raw materials and food stuffs. (Series B No. 2, issued on October 5th 1920.)

International congress of workers in the food and drink trades. (Series A No. 4, issued on October 11th 1920.)

The British government and the miners' Federation of Great Britain. — Conference between Sir Robert Horne and the miners' Federation. (Series A No. 5, issued on October 13th 1920.)

The congress of the Labour and Socialist International. (Series A No. 6, issued on October 14th 1920.)

The miners' international. (Series A No. 7, issued on October 19th 1920.)

The International Labour organisation a comparison. (Series A No. 8, issued on October 21th 1920.)

The International Congress of Metal Workers. (Series A No. 9, issued on October 22nd 1920.)

The British legislation on unemployment insurance. (Series C No. 1, issued on October 26th 1920.)

The Bulgarian law on compulsory labour. (Series C No. 3, issued on November 2nd 1920.)

(2) — In English only.

The British Government and the miners' Federation of Great Britain. Conference between the government and the triple industrial alliance. (Series A No. 10, issued on October 27th 1920.)

(3) — In French only.

L'action gouvernementale dans la lutte contre le chômage en Italie. (Series C No. 2, issued on October 27th 1920.)

Le conflit des métallurgistes en Italie. — Le contrôle syndical dans l'industrie. (Series A No. 11, issued on November 5th 1920.)

1 In case where the English or French text of a Report has not yet been published, it will be issued at a later date.