First International Congress of Christian Land Workers' Unions

(Coblenz, 27-28 April 1921)

INTRODUCTION

During the International Congress of Christian Trade Unions which was held at the Hague in June 1920, it occurred to some of the representatives of the Christian Agricultural Workers' Unions that it would be desirable to hold a special international congress of the organisations which they represented.

It was therefore decided to summon a preliminary conference, which met at Cologne on 21 January 1921.

This conference was attended by representatives of the Christian Land Workers' Unions of Belgium, France, Germany, and Holland. Mr. Franz Behrens, Mr. A. J. Loerakker, and Mr. René Carels were elected members of the Organising Committee.

At a meeting of this committee held at Cologne on 24 February 1921 it was decided to hold the international congress in April. The chief items on the agenda were as follows: the foundation of an International Federation of Christian Land Workers' Unions; statutes of the Federation; subscription; election of the Secretariat of the Federation; the International Labour Organisation and the application to agriculture of the Washington decisions on the regulation of hours of work; unemployment prevention and relief; and a report by Mr. Franz Behrens on (a) the guarantee of the right of association and combination; (b) the protection of women and children; (c) the sanitary conditions of agricultural workers; (d) protection in the case of accident, sickness, invalidity, and old age; and (e) technical education.

The following tables show the central organisations which sent representatives and those which declared their adherence, as well as the names of the delegates and the membership of their constituent unions as stated by them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations represented at the congress</th>
<th>No. of members</th>
<th>Delegate</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christlicher Reichslandarbeiterbund</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>H. Huber, Linz</td>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrale ouvrière des jardiniers, agriculteurs et forestiers</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>Georg Stimpfer, Linz</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zentralverband der Landarbeiter</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>René Carels, Boitsfort, Bruxelles</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H. Hübner, Linz</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Georg Stimpfer, Linz</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>René Carels, Boitsfort, Bruxelles</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Johann Bayer, Weissenburg</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Adam Wolf, Weissenburg</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Josef Ax, Coblenz</td>
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<td>Alois Späth, Mainz</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johann Junglass, Coblenz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederl. Roomsch-Katholieke Landarbeamers</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>A. J. Loerakker, Haarlem</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bond</td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Salman, Haarlem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Loerakker, Hille</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Dekker, Loosduin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. J. Kniper, Limmen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Knetsch, Utrecht</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherl. Christelyke Landarbeidersbond</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Member of the Reichswirtschaftsrat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations declaring adherence to the congress</th>
<th>No. of members</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bund &quot;Landtreue&quot; (Verband Christlicher Landarbeiter) für das Tschechoslow. Staatsgebiet)</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>Biliú</td>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation française des travailleurs de la terre</td>
<td>50 local unions</td>
<td>5, Rue Cadet, Paris</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keresztényszocialista Földmunkásokcs Földműveek Országos</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kossuth Lajos Ute 1, Budapest IV</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federazione Nazionale dei Mezadri e Piccoli Affittuari</td>
<td>741,282</td>
<td>Via Duilio 2 A, Roma</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federazione Italiana dei Piccoli Proprietari</td>
<td>108,589</td>
<td>Via Principe Umberto 7, Milano</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federazione Italiana dei Lavoratori Agricoli</td>
<td>94,961</td>
<td>Corso Romana 61, Milano</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE WORK OF THE CONGRESS

The congress was opened by the Chairman of the Organising Committee, who welcomed the delegates.

Formation of an International Federation of Christian Land Workers' Unions

After careful discussion the congress adopted the statutes, the text of which is reproduced as an appendix.

At the proposal of a committee specially elected for this purpose the congress decided that the subscription of the affiliated unions to the Federation should be calculated on the basis of the highest normal weekly wage for agricultural workers in each country, for which the following figures were taken: Germany, 150 marks; Belgium, 60 francs; Austria, 700 kronen; Netherlands, 20 florins.

The following persons were appointed members of the Secretariat of the Federation: chairman, Franz Behrens; vice-chairman, A. J. Loerakker; secretary, René Carels; assistant secretary, J. A. Knetsch; members, H. Huber and Gustav Husler.

It was also decided that the headquarters of the Federation should be those of the secretary.

The International Labour Organisation

Mr. Serrarens spoke on the International Labour Organisation, and proposed the following resolutions.

Whereas it is necessary in the interest of satisfactory social legislation to conclude international Conventions fixing minimum standards for the national legislation of various countries, the aims of the International Labour Organisation should be strongly supported.

The International Labour Organisation cannot achieve its object unless it is organised in such a way as to allow the trade union movement as a whole to exercise its influence in the sphere of the international organisation of labour.

The Christian trade union movement in the various countries should be represented at the International Labour Conferences. According to the Peace Treaty, the appointment of the delegates and technical advisers of all countries should be made in agreement with all the national federations of trade unions. If a Christian federation is not consulted in such a case as this, it should make a protest to the Conference against the appointment of the delegates and technical advisers.

The Christian trade union movement should be represented on the Governing Body.

These resolutions were adopted unanimously.

Application of the Washington Decisions to Agricultural Workers

Mr. A. J. Loerakker proposed the following resolutions on the regulation of hours of work.

It cannot be admitted in principle that there should be any other standard for land workers than that laid down for industrial workers by the Washington decisions. As regards the regulation of hours of work, however, the special characteristics of agriculture should be taken into account, as work depends largely on weather and climate conditions. For this reason it is impossible to fix a maximum working day of 8 hours. The
regulation of hours should therefore differ from that applying to industrial workers in as much as the average working day should be fixed at 8 hours.

In order to prevent possible difficulties, each country should have the right to take special measures as regards overtime in view of the requirements of certain branches of agriculture and of exceptional circumstances due to conditions of climate. If the right of each country to regulate its own regulations concerning overtime is admitted, and if a transition period is fixed, it will be possible to apply an average working day of 8 hours for the whole of agriculture in every country.

A second resolution on the same subject was proposed by Mr. Behrens in the name of the German delegation, and ran as follows:

In principle, the working hours of agriculture should not be different from those established for industry by the Washington resolutions. Agricultural work, however, depends on natural conditions (climate, weather, period of growth of plants, etc.), which are not the same in different countries. In regulating the hours of work it is therefore necessary to make allowance for the special nature of agriculture and its various branches.

It should be allowable for the legislation of each country to lay down regulations concerning agricultural work which differ from those applied to industry, and to fix a larger number of hours of work per year whenever this is justified by circumstances.

Whenever national legislation allows a greater number of hours of work for agriculture than for industrial workers, it should lay down that the employers' and workers' organisations, either for the whole country or for the district are free to agree upon shorter working hours. In this case the shorter hours should be substituted for those laid down by law in all undertakings.

In other cases where unforeseen events or other causes of force majeure imperil the organic or inorganic wealth of the country, either directly or indirectly, permission should be granted to work overtime, for which special pay must be given.

A special commission was appointed to harmonise these two resolutions. This commission proposed the following resolution, which was adopted unanimously.

In principle, the hours of work of agricultural workers cannot be different from those of industrial workers.

In regulating hours of work it is, however, necessary to take the particular character of agriculture into account, as the work largely depends on natural circumstances (climate, period of growth of plants, weather changes, etc.).

The hours of work should be fixed at an average of eight per day unless special natural circumstances in any particular country or district make such a measure impossible.

Whenever the law allows hours of work in excess of eight in any particular country or district, the employers' and workers' organisations have the right of fixing shorter working hours by agreement. In this case such agreements shall have the force of law in lieu of the above-mentioned legal dispositions in the country or district to which they apply.

In case of unforeseen national events and in exceptional cases which may involve serious losses as regards cultivation, crops, or live-stock, permission may be given to work overtime, which shall be paid for at special rates.

The congress unanimously adopted the following resolution on unemployment prevention and relief proposed by Mr. R. F. Carels.

In regulating hours of work, care should be taken to reduce the hours during the busy season to the strictly necessary minimum so that all work which can be put off may be reserved for slack seasons.

The overtime which is necessary should, as far as possible, be remunerated by holidays with pay, which should be given in the slack season so as to make the workers' income as steady as possible.
In order to ensure the satisfactory administration of labour exchanges and their impartiality as regards the interests of employers and workers, each exchange should be managed by a joint committee of employers and workers, which should be nominated in agreement with the organisations concerned.

Employment exchanges should charge no fees. If on grounds of conscience or for other valid reasons free employment exchanges satisfying all the above-stated conditions are set up by private enterprise, such exchanges should receive subsidies from the public authorities.

If there are no special exchanges for agriculture and gardening, at least one employers' representative and one workers' representative belonging to these industries should be a member of the managing committees of the employment exchanges.

It is specially recommended that agricultural workers should be allowed credit by the public authorities in order to purchase plots of ground.

There is no valid reason for the exclusion of land workers from compulsory unemployment insurance. The arguments generally brought forward will have still less force when hours of work are regulated and when the administrative organisation of such regulation is closely connected with that of unemployment insurance and control.

Mr. Franz Behrens submitted a special report on the other items on the agenda of the Third Session of the International Labour Conference.

After considerable discussion the congress adopted the following resolutions.

Protection of Women and Children in Agriculture.

The Draft Convention concerning the employment of women before and after childbirth, which was adopted by the International Labour Conference of the League of Nations, should be applied to agriculture.

The Draft Convention concerning nightwork for women should also be applied to agriculture, with the reservation that exceptions for unmarried women should be allowed in case of necessity, provided that such exceptions are agreed upon by the employers' and workers' organisations.

The Draft Convention fixing the minimum age of admission of children to industrial work should be applied to agriculture.

The Draft Convention concerning the night work of children in industry should be applied to agriculture.

Women who have to look after their children under 14 years of age, if they have no domestic assistance, shall not, as a general rule, be continuously employed on paid work, and shall in no case be employed before the time when the schools of the district open.

Technical Agricultural Education.

With a view to improving technical, domestic, and general education and thus increasing the capacity of men and women agricultural workers, the competent authorities in each country should make attendance at evening classes compulsory for children under 18.

The instruction given should be adapted to agriculture and country life. In the case of girls the education should include household instruction and the care of infants and children. In the case of boys it should include domestic economy, the care of animals, the cultivation of plants, the use of agricultural machinery, and other branches of agricultural education.

Sanitary Conditions

The following measures should be laid down either by national legislation or by other means: agricultural workers who have to handle substances which are injurious to health or who are engaged on work dangerous to health shall be effectively protected against contagious diseases; the housing accommodation provided by the employer as part of the worker's wage shall be free from objections from a hygienic and moral point of view.

Guarantee of the Right of Association and Combination.

There shall be no legal provisions preventing agricultural workers from combining, forming unions, and making use of the right to strike in defence of their interests in order to obtain better wages and conditions of work.
National legislation should guarantee the right of combination of workers against anything which threatens it, and against any measures aiming at compelling agricultural workers to adhere to or to dissociate themselves from any association or agreement, by injuring their reputation or their economic interests.

Two closing speeches were made, one by Mr. Behrens and the other by Mr. Serrarens. Both speakers emphasised the moral character of the Christian trade union movement, which was not concerned exclusively with the material well-being of the workers, but placed the principles and rules of action laid down by Christian doctrine in the forefront of its programme.

APPENDIX

STATUTES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN LAND WORKERS' UNIONS

Name and Headquarters

ARTICLE 1

The Christian Land Workers' Trade Unions unite to form an International Federation of Christian Land Workers' Unions. This organisation shall be of a federal character and shall respect the autonomy of the affiliated national unions. The congress shall select the headquarters of the Federation.

Basis

ARTICLE 2

The Federation adopts the principles of Christianity as a basis. It therefore affirms that the economic and social life of all the members of one nation implies mutual collaboration. It consequently repudiates violent methods and class warfare, whether from the employers' or the workers' side. The Federation considers that society as at present constituted, especially as regards economic conditions, is in opposition to the spirit of Christianity. It therefore aims at a radical transformation of society according to the principles which it upholds by means of a legitimate and organic evolution. The principal object of the Federation is the defence of the interest of agricultural workers as regards economic, public, and social conditions.

Object

ARTICLE 3

The Federation, in accord with the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, has the following objects:

(a) to represent the interests of agricultural workers on the basis of the principles laid down in Article 2, especially as regards the international organisation of labour;

(b) to further the interests of the affiliated unions;

(c) to encourage propaganda for the Christian land workers' trade union movement in the countries where this movement does not yet exist, and to induce all organisations based on Christian principles which have not yet become affiliated to affiliate;

(d) to encourage mutual assistance between the affiliated unions if the necessity arises.

Means of Action

ARTICLE 4

The Federation tries to attain these objects by legitimate means, viz.:

(a) instituting and maintaining an international secretariat;

(b) holding international congresses dealing with questions connected with agriculture and land work;
(c) collecting information on the position of land workers and their organisations in various countries;
(d) collecting information on wage and labour conditions in various countries;
(e) encouraging the conclusion of agreements between the national Christian organisations of various countries;
(f) publishing an official journal, and, if necessary, other publications;
(g) all other legitimate means calculated directly or indirectly to further the objects of the Federation.

Right of Admission

ARTICLE 5

The following may be admitted as members of the Federation: all national federations and all national unions of land workers which accept Christian principles as a basis, which accept the present statutes, and are affiliated to a national federation forming part of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, except in cases where there is no federation in the country in question and where special circumstances exist. Any national union which desires to be admitted as a member of the Federation should present a request to the Secretariat of the Federation, which is authorised to decide on questions of this kind. Appeals against the decision of the Secretariat may be made to the next International Congress following.

ARTICLE 6

A national union which has been admitted as a member of the Federation ceases to be a member
(a) if it announces its intention of leaving the Federation in writing, such announcements should be made to the secretariat by registered letter at least three months before the end of the year; membership ceases at the end of the current year;
(b) if it is declared to have forfeited its membership on account of action contrary to the principles or statutes of the Federation or to the binding decisions legitimately made by the latter, or if it has not paid its annual subscription.
A union may not be declared to have forfeited its membership except by a majority of at least three-quarters of the votes duly recorded at an international congress.

Secretariat

ARTICLE 7

The secretariat of the Federation consists of a minimum of seven members elected by the congress. The congress appoints the following secretariat: chairman and vice-chairman, secretary and assistant secretary, and assessors. The secretary is entrusted with the administration of the funds. The members of the secretariat are elected for their particular functions. The executive consists of the chairman, vice-chairman, and the secretary. The members of the secretariat are elected for the period between one ordinary congress and the next. If a member of the secretariat resigns, the organisation of which he was a member shall appoint a substitute to serve until the next congress.

ARTICLE 8

The secretariat meets whenever the chairman in agreement with the secretary considers it necessary, or when three members of the secretariat present a request to the secretary with reasons. The secretariat has also the following duties:
(a) to represent the Federation in the trade union movement and elsewhere;
(b) to observe the statutes and carry out the decisions of the congress;
(c) to summon ordinary and extraordinary congresses and to make decisions in exceptional cases under reservation of the approval of the congress;

(d) to engage and pay the staff of the Federation when necessary;

(e) to do everything which may be considered necessary in the interests of the Federation.

Congress

ARTICLE 9

An international congress shall be held at least every two years. The secretary shall submit to this congress a report on the work accomplished since the last congress, and shall present a statement on the position of the Christian unions of land workers in the various countries.

The secretary shall submit a report justifying his administration of the funds. A committee of three members elected by the congress for this purpose is responsible for the necessary control.

It submits a report to the congress on the result of its investigations.

The congress gives a decision on this report and on the administration of the funds by the secretary.

The congress elects the secretariat and discusses the proposals placed on the agenda by the secretariats of the affiliated national unions.

The affiliated national unions must be informed of the proposal to hold a congress at least three months in advance, so that the items which they propose for the agenda may be mentioned in the letter convoking the congress.

Such proposals shall be transmitted to the secretariat at least eight weeks before the congress.

The final agenda and the invitations to the congress shall be sent at least four weeks in advance to the various affiliated national unions.

ARTICLE 10

The congress consists of the secretariat of the Federation and the delegates of the affiliated unions.

Each affiliated union may send as many delegates as it wishes.

The national unions are responsible for the expenses of their respective delegates.

Each affiliated national union of land workers is entitled to one vote for 10,000 members or under, two votes for 10,000 to 50,000 members, three votes for 50,000 to 100,000 members, four votes for 100,000 to 200,000 members, and five votes for more than 200,000 members.

Subscriptions

ARTICLE 11

The subscription of the affiliated unions is payable six months in advance. The subscription shall be fixed according to the membership on 30 June and 31 December. Subscriptions should be paid to the secretary before the end of September and March respectively.

The amount of the subscription is fixed by the congress.

Elections and Votes

ARTICLE 12

All elections of persons are made in writing. All votes on other matters are given verbally. If at the first voting, no one obtains an absolute majority of votes (one-half plus one), a second free vote is taken. If an absolute majority is still not obtained, a further vote is taken including only those persons who obtained the most votes, the number being double that of the vacancies to be filled. In this case, a relative majority is decisive. If the votes on any proposal are equally divided, the proposal is rejected. If the votes are equally divided in the election of a person, the decision shall be made by lot.

Financial Year

ARTICLE 13

The financial year of the Federation is from 1 January to 31 December inclusive.
Amendment of the Statutes

ARTICLE 14

The present statutes may be amended if proposals for such amendment appear on the agenda of the congress and they are accepted after discussion by at least two-thirds of the votes duly registered. The congress may, however, decide by a similar majority to make amendments to statutes, even if such amendments do not appear on the agenda, provided that no member of the congress objects to the discussion of such amendments.

Duration and Dissolution

ARTICLE 15

The Federation is founded for an indefinite period. It may be dissolved by a decision made under the same conditions as apply to decisions concerning amendments of the statutes. In case of dissolution of the Federation, the property remaining in its possession shall be placed at the disposal of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, or, if the latter no longer exists, it shall be used as far as possible in a manner which is in accordance with the aims of the Federation.

Final Clause

ARTICLE 16

The secretariat decides in all cases not provided for by the present statutes and is responsible to the congress for such decisions.
STUDIES AND REPORTS

already issued

Except where stated, all Studies and Reports are issued both in English and French.

Series A


2. The Dispute in the Metal Industry in Italy: Trade Union Control of Industry (First part), issued 25 September 1920.

3. Annual Meeting of the Trades Union Congress 1920, issued 4 October 1920.

4. International Congress of Workers in the Food and Drink Trades, issued 11 October 1920.


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No. 16. TENDENCIES OF EUROPEAN LABOUR LEGISLATION SINCE THE WAR, issued 11 February 1921.


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No. 1. **Cancer of the Bladder Among Workers in Aniline Factories**, issued 23 February 1921.


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No. 1. **The International Protection of Women Workers**, issued 15 October 1921.

Series K
No. 1. **First International Congress of Landworkers’ Unions Affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions**, issued November 1920.


" 5. **The Eight Hour Day in Agriculture Before the French Chamber of Deputies**, issued 10 February 1921.

" 6. **The Regulation of Labour in Agriculture in France**, issued 23 April 1921.