



OXFORD JOURNALS  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The "World's Economic Expansion" Congress

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Source: *The Economic Journal*, Mar., 1906, Vol. 16, No. 61 (Mar., 1906), pp. 146-149

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2221161>

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arrived. It may not have undivided support from scientific or from public opinion, but, composed as it chiefly is of persons more or less aloof from politics, it will escape many of the entanglements that politics breed. Moreover, there is not wanting evidence that the public feels that the question of the Unemployed can no longer be shelved, even should the present crisis prove to be merely temporary. There is much to prove that the nation as a whole is with the Commission : and there is a general feeling that its appointment is necessary, and that its work will be beneficial.

N. B. DEARLE

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#### THE "WORLD'S ECONOMIC EXPANSION" CONGRESS.

THE congress which met from the 24th-29th of last September, at Mons, in Belgium, to consider the world's economic expansion was an official congress. It was organised by the Government under the King's patronage in consequence of a royal proclamation dated February 17th, 1905. By the proclamation the Presidents of the Chamber of Representatives and of the Senate, and the members of the Ministry, were appointed honorary presidents. A council was also appointed, consisting of high functionaries, presidents of commercial and industrial associations, leaders of industry, and prominent men of business. M. Beernaert, Minister of State, was chosen to be acting-president. Although the congress was arranged on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition at Liège, it was decided to hold it at Mons, presumably because of the position of the latter as a great coal-mining and manufacturing centre.

According to the prospectus issued by the committee of organisation, by taking advantage of the influx of foreign visitors attracted by the Liège exhibition, opportunity was to be afforded to competent persons from different countries to exchange opinions on the different points arising from the ever-increasing economic contact among nations. Where occasion arose, the bases of such international arrangements as were demanded by the common interests might be laid down. It was even declared in the *Revue Economique Internationale* that the congress might open up the way for the creation of a kind of international economic Parliament.

Judging by the numbers who took part, and by the reports of its proceedings, the congress was a great success. The former amounted to 2,670, of whom about one-tenth were foreigners.

But the list is unquestionably incomplete and should, I believe, be more correctly reckoned at 3,000. The reports are not yet all printed, but already number nearly 300. Commercial, educational, and scientific institutions were well represented.

The congress was divided into six sections. Each member, although free to take part in the discussions of all the sections, was requested to enter his name under one section only. The sections were entitled:—I. Instruction; II. International Statistics; III. Economic and Tariff Politics; IV. Maritime; V. Civilising Expansion in the Direction of New Countries; VI. Methods and Agencies of Expansion.

Section I.—This department, which was by far the most successful in proportion to the number of entries and reports, took as its programme, "How to adapt education to the world's economic expansion."

Section II.—"How to improve international statistics referring to industrial and agricultural production, to the valuation of natural wealth, to values in personal property, and to imports and exports."

The resolutions passed by this section took the form of a recommendation:—"The Belgian Government is called upon to take the initiative in summoning an international conference for the purpose of unifying mineral statistics. There is need also for an international convention to create a body of international statistics. And in the statistics of foreign commerce certain methodological reforms are desirable; for instance, the methods followed should be pointed out, special commerce should be more precisely distinguished from general commerce, the movement of the precious metals should be indicated, and efforts, by way of international agreement, should be made to secure a uniform basis for measuring imported and exported commodities. All declarations of value should be made on a generalised system, without omitting to give official values where they exist. Further, the Belgian Government is called on to take the initiative in bringing about conferences between the heads of institutions of commercial statistics in different countries, as well as other conferences between the managers of labour bureaux in different countries, so as to measure the effective utility of the worker in different industries. Finally, it is required of commercial statistics that they should give information as to both the value and the quality of commodities."

Section III.—"Trusts, customs, unions, tariffs, and tariff disputes."

The papers covered a wide field, notably those on trusts. On this subject there was the greatest divergence of opinion. In the absence of agreement it was decided that the question of trusts should be settled by special legislation in each country. A recommendation was nevertheless signed in favour of a periodical census of the statistical services rendered by different countries, in order to get uniformity of method in the classification and statistics of customs and excise.

Section IV.—M. Beernaert presided at the debates of this, the maritime section. A resolution was passed calling for a diplomatic conference to establish a uniform system in the methods of gauging ships.

Section V.—“Explorers and methods of exploration.” Baron Descamps, Minister for the Congo, presided. A resolution was passed, and signed by twelve Polar explorers from different countries, calling for the formation of an international association to investigate the Arctic regions by organising scientific exploration. The King of the Belgians was requested to take the initiative. A further important proposition was adopted respecting the ethnographical investigation of countries newly opened up. It was decided to found an international bureau of ethnography, with the mission of publishing inquiries, and of centralising and issuing information. A provisional committee was appointed. Steps were also taken to facilitate the registration of economic and geographical materials referring to every country. To this end it was recommended that museums, collections, and national document offices should be instituted. Further, it was resolved that the International Institute of Bibliography, founded by the Belgian Government in 1895, should be engaged to render international service in these matters.

Nor was this all. It was recommended that an international court of law be created, consisting of legal experts of different countries, to give opinion or arbitrate in international disputes respecting matters of civil or commercial law where individuals were implicated. The initiative was committed to the King.

Section VI.—“Means and agents of expansion: commercial travellers, shipping offices, &c. Private enterprise and official support. Consuls.”

The provisional analytical report does not allow us to get an adequate idea of the resolutions passed in this section. But we may mention one aiming at the improvement of consular representation.

Such are, in outline, the results of the congress. On certain

points a practical solution was attained. On many others the way to desirable reforms was opened up, or, at least, opinions were exchanged. So far, the congress would seem to have made, in Belgium at least, a very powerful impression on public opinion. It has committed to print an enormous mass of materials, very unequal in quality it may be, but which will unquestionably serve to clear up ideas and make ready the way for further progress.

LAURENT DECHESNE

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### ECONOMIC STUDIES IN ITALY.

THERE is no task more hopeless than that of generalising in some one formula the characteristic feature of one's own times. And yet, to define the essential qualities in the thought of Italy at the beginning of this century seems to present no insurmountable difficulties. The mind of Italy is to-day returning on its own steps, beating a retreat from the theoretical audacities in which it engaged itself so boldly in the past generation. This is a fact that comes out most clearly in the lofty regions of philosophy. A very decided reaction has set in from the days when Italian thinkers abandoned themselves eagerly to the new currents of positive philosophy, when a distinguished teacher of psychiatry announced the discovery of *Cerebro-Walt*, and when leading university chairs celebrated before frenzied disciples the saturnalia of atheism. On the one hand, it is true, the apologists *à outrance* of superstition and obscurantism have to some extent relaxed their ancient anathemas against modern positive science. But at the present day it is among the champions of knowledge themselves that we see a transformation being wrought. Mechanical determinism, dominant hitherto, is being superseded by the concept of free human initiative. The earlier idolatry for Spencer has given way to the worship of James and his semi-idealistic doctrines. And recently a writer of repute, Professor Villa, has had the courage to rehabilitate, if in somewhat muffled form, the hoary thesis of an immortal soul. Thus Italian philosophy no longer looks on the Church and its dogmas with systematic aversion. Across the abyss that yawned in other days betwixt the Vatican and the Accademia dei Lincei the younger generation is erecting a bridge, majestic and fantastic, over which enthusiasts predict that science and revelation will shortly pass fraternally arm in arm.