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REFORM OF THE CALENDAR.

(Conclusion).

PARIS CONGRESS, 1914.

The Sixth International Congress of Chambers of Commerce, held in Paris in July, 1914, also dealt with the question of fixing the date of Easter and calendar reform.

In the first place the President reported that the Swiss Government had not yet had a proper opportunity of convening the promised International Diplomatic Conference on this subject. He stated further that the Churches would seem to be unwilling to consent to any change unless assured that the desire therefor was general and did not emanate simply from a group or from a minority. He suggested that all should assist in propagating the idea of the proposed reforms, and announced that the Permanent Committee on March 23rd last had appointed a Special Committee to ascertain the best means of accelerating as far as possible the realization of the object in view.

CALENDAR REFORM IN THE BRITISH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

It is noteworthy that a Bill for a reformed calendar was introduced in Parliament on March 16th, 1906, by Mr. Robert Pearce, but got no further than the first reading.

In 1921 a Bill was introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Desborough for fixing the date of Easter on the second Sunday of April, but was not passed into law.

Three previous measures of the same kind shared the same fate.

In this connection the following report of the proceedings in the House of Lords on 9th November, 1921, is of interest:—

FIXED EASTER PROPOSAL.

Lord Desborough: My Lords, I desire to ask His Majesty's Government the Question standing in my name on the Paper—namely, what has resulted from the communications of the Foreign Office and the Home Office with the Holy See with regard to securing a fixed date for Easter.

It will be in the recollection of the House that the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill to secure a fixed date for Easter was adjourned on the Motion of the most reverend Primate in order to give His Majesty's Government, and more especially the Home Office, an opportunity of entering into communication with the Vatican upon the subject. I do not know whether His Majesty's Government can tell us what the result of those communications has been. Long and elaborate statements have appeared in the newspapers as to the appointment by the Holy See of a Committee, under the chairmanship of Cardinal Mercier. The Committee appears to consist of most of the astronomers holding high positions in every country, and it is said that they are going to sit in April. Two of the supposed members of this alleged Committee have been interviewed at some length in the newspapers. I should like to ask His Majesty's Government whether they could give any information on those points. I beg to move.

The Earl of Onslow: My Lords, in consequence of the debate in your Lordships' House enquiries were made by the Foreign Office through His Majesty's Minister at the Vatican, and His Majesty's High Commissioner at Constantinople, to ascertain the views held by the Vatican and by the Holy Synod respectively in regard to the proposal. In a Despatch dated September 15, Sir Horace Rumbold reported that the question had been discussed by the Holy Synod at Constantinople, which had decided that it was not competent to deal with it. It could only be dealt with by an Œcumenical Council which could not be held until

a Patriarch had been elected in the place of His Holiness, Monsignor Germanos, who died some two years ago.

As regards the Vatican, in a Despatch of May 19, Count de Salis reported that he had addressed an enquiry to the Holy See, and that Monsignor Cerretti, in conversation, had stated that the question would receive careful attention. Subsequently Count de Salis informed the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that Monsignor Cerretti had just notified him that the question had been laid before the Pope, and had received His Holiness' careful attention, but that it was felt, in so far as the Catholic Church was concerned, that there was insufficient ground for changing the present system. As the noble Lord has said, allusions have been made in the Press to a Committee said to have been appointed by the Pope to enquire into this question. Enquiries were made by telegram of His Majesty's Minister at the Vatican. The reply just received from him is to the effect that nothing is known at the Vatican of any such Committee.

W. ARNOLD'S PROPOSAL.

Towards the end of 1921 there was published in London a brochure entitled, "Bank Holidays Fixed," with the sub-title, "Father Time Interviewed," from the pen of Mr. W. Arnold, LL.B. Lond. In this pamphlet the question of the simplification of the calendar is treated in a very lucid, convincing and persuasive manner; the proposals for the attainment of the desired end are set out very clearly; various objections are stated and met in a spirit of sweet reasonableness; and numerous advantages which would result from the change are dealt with.

It is remarkable that apart from a reference to MM. Deslandres and Flammarion, on page 14, the author is confessedly unaware of the labours of the many other workers in the same field and of the very considerable progress that has already been made towards the realization of the reform he advocates, especially on the lines of the pioneer Geneva scheme of Professor Grosclaude. The most remarkable feature of Mr. Arnold's scheme, however, is that it is essentially identical with that of M. Grosclaude, differing from the latter only in the following inessential minor details: Mr. Arnold suggests naming the odd (or 365th) day of the year "Christmas Day"—M. Grosclaude would name it "New Year's Day"; Mr. Arnold submits the 14th April as a suitable fixed date for Easter—M. Grosclaude the 7th April; Mr. Arnold would prefer Leap Year Day every fourth year to come between 31st September and 1st October—M. Grosclaude recommends its insertion between 31st June and 1st July.

Mr. Arnold's suggested alteration of the date of Christmas is decidedly a psychological error, which, if persisted in, would militate against the adoption of the revised calendar; to the minds of the vast majority of Christians such a change would appear too revolutionary. Grosclaude's system has the advantage of respecting the Christmas tradition. Again, Mr. Arnold's proposal to place Leap Year Day at the end of September appears less logical than that of M. Grosclaude, who suggested the insertion of this "intercalary" day at the end of June.

VARIOUS PROJECTS.

We subjoin a list* which is, however, by no means exhaustive, of the better known and most important proposals or suggestions for the reform of the calendar, show-

* From a pamphlet "La Réforme du Calendrier," published in Geneva in September, 1910, by La Commission de la Classe d'Industrie et de Commerce de la Société des Arts pour le projet Grosclaude (réforme du calendrier). These various projects are described and discussed in the issue of 15th June, 1910, of the "Bulletin Commercial et Industrielle Suisse."

ing only their main points of difference with that of M. Grosclaude.

Mr. Alexander Philip, LL.D., Brechin, Scotland. — The quarter commences with a Sunday instead of a Monday.

MM. Armelin and Flammariion, Paris. — Leap Year Day follows immediately after New Year's Day. The year begins at the Spring Equinox. M. Flammariion proposes to replace the names of the months by designations worthy of the intellectual tendencies of Humanity, such as: Truth, Knowledge, Wisdom, etc.

M. Saladilof, Russia. — Leap Year Day is placed to follow New Year's Day. The year begins at the Spring Equinox. Easter is the 19th April, or the 9th May of the Gregorian calendar. Leap Year Day would be suppressed every 128 years.

Professor Dr. W. Köppen. — The three months of each quarter have respectively 31, 30 and 30 days. Each quarter commences with a Sunday. The fourth quarter has 92 days and ends with Sunday, 31st December.

Pastor Rosenkranz and M. von Hesse-Wartegg. — The three months of each quarter have respectively 31, 30 and 30 days. Each quarter begins with a Sunday. The 365th day, without name as a day of the week, is at the end of the year: St. Silvester.

M. Ch. W. E. G. Büshing, Halle. — The three months of each quarter have respectively 31, 30 and 30 days. Each quarter begins with a Sunday. The 365th day is at the end of the year: St. Silvester. Leap Year Day is between the 25th and 26th May.

M. Zech-Levie, Mons, Belgium. — The twelve months have respectively: 31, 28, 31, 30, 31, 30, 31, 31, 30, 30, 31 and 31 days. The 1st January is without name as a day of the week, and the 2nd is a Sunday. In Leap Years February has 29 days, and Leap Year Day, without name as a day of the week, comes after the 19th February. Easter is the 10th April.

M. Arnold Kampe, Hamburg. — The three months of each quarter have respectively 35, 28 and 28 days. Each quarter begins with a Sunday. The 365th day is Sunday, the 29th December.

Mr. J. C. Robertson, Kirkcaldy, Scotland. — The three months of each quarter have respectively 28, 28 and 35 days. Each quarter begins with a Sunday.

M. Reininghaus, Zurich. — Each half-year is composed of six months of 28 days and one half-month of 14 days. Each half-year begins with a Monday. One day, without name as a day of the week, comes after the winter half-year; two days in Leap Years.

M. Auguste Comte, French Positivist Philosopher. — Thirteen months of 28 days. The 365th day at the end of the year. The months have new names, such as: Moses, Homer, Aristotle, etc.

Within the past three years a movement has been started in the United States for the adoption of a reformed calendar to be called the "Liberty" Calendar. The proposal is for a year of 13 months of 28 days each, the added month to be called "Liberty" and to come between February and March; with New Year Day and the extra day in Leap Year as independent holidays not included in the week or month, the latter being sandwiched in between the end of June and the beginning of July. Each of the thirteen months would have exactly four weeks and would begin on Monday. Each would contain 24 working days and "in order to retain exactly one-seventh of the year for Sundays, every seventh New Year Day would be New Year Sunday and every seventh Leap Year Day would be Leap Year Sunday." — This looks like a Lunar calendar

and resembles in essentials the proposal of M. Auguste Comte above referred to. There would seem to be small likelihood of this scheme meeting with general acceptance, partly because of the still widespread superstition regarding the number 13, but chiefly because it is too much at variance with acquired habits.

We cannot pass without mention, in relation to this section of our subject, the Republican Calendar, adopted by the Convention in France on 5th October, 1793. This calendar, as is known, comprised 12 months, each of 30 days, with 5 or 6 days superadded; each month had three "decades" of 10 days. This calendar only remained in vogue for 30 years.

CHIEF ADVANTAGES OF THE PROPOSED CALENDAR REFORM.

We can only briefly enumerate a few of these.

One of the greatest advantages of the reformed calendar would be the fixation of the date of Easter and consequently of the dates of the other moveable feasts and fasts which depend on it. The date of Easter is no longer exclusively an ecclesiastical matter, but has become, for example, a question of intimate concern to the business world as affecting the spring season trade, and to holiday makers as regards the chance of fine weather. The anomaly of a fixed date for Christmas with a variable date for Easter would be removed.

In the reformed calendar the length of the quarters and half-years would be equalized, while the number of days in each month would become regular and as nearly equal as the length of the Solar year will permit without altering the number of months in the year to which the world has become habituated. The week of seven days, including Sunday, would remain unaltered. Furthermore, the same date in every year would always fall on the same day of the week, and thus anniversaries of important or interesting events would always correspond both as regards day and date.

The adoption of the invariable calendar would make it possible to fix once for all the most suitable and appropriate day and date for all those events which are of periodical recurrence, such as National Observances, Parliamentary Sittings, Legal Sittings, Opening and Closing of Universities, Colleges and Schools, Vacations and Holidays, Elections, and all other such occasions, whether public or private, general or local.

The business world would benefit to a greater extent than may appear likely at a first glance. The equalisation of the periods into which the year is divided would simplify many calculations, interests and discounts, for example, which are at present complicated by the inequalities of the existing calendar. A vast saving would be effected in the cost of calendars and almanacks, in addition to the saving of time spent in referring to these when fixing dates for future engagements and appointments.

For purposes of comparative statistics the reform of the calendar would be valuable as a means of more accurate comparison between like periods.

In short, it is difficult to imagine any sphere of national life, religious, political, social, commercial, public or private, that would not be decidedly advantaged by the reform of the calendar.

It is hoped that the foregoing statement of the outlines of the question will tend to awaken interest in its possibilities and aid in the formation of a public opinion favourable to the accomplishment of the desired end.