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SILK ASSERTS ITSELF

The previous issue of «Swiss Textiles» contained a paragraph dealing with the International Silk Congress, though at the time, the space at our disposal allowed only a brief mention of this important circumstance which certainly deserved a longer account. We are now giving the essential points of the information we have been able to obtain at first-hand concerning this major event.

The Editor.

The International Silk Congress at Lyons and Paris this year was the first of its kind to be held since the war. The International Silk Federation, founded after 1918, developed considerably during the between-war period, but ceased all activity during the war years. The last great international congress was held in Zurich in 1929; after that, only conferences were held in Milan, Barcelona and Paris for the study of particular problems.

It is to the Lyons Silk Federation that must be attributed the great merit of having taken the initiative of organizing a meeting on a large scale in view of reviving the International Federation. It is encouraging to note that this endeavour has had excellent results. First it must be said that our friends in France were most efficient hosts and the participants — all of them, even those who are used to international assemblies of this kind — unanimously admitted that no Congress had ever been better or so brilliantly organized. The technical part of the programme went off without a hitch, for not the slightest detail had been neglected. It is easy to understand what an enormous amount of organizing and executive work these preparations must have entailed. On the social side, the programme was extraordinarily varied, making an indelible impression on those who were lucky enough to share in it.

The Lyons Silk Federation sent the invitations and prepared the schedule of discussion, devoted entirely to problems of the *natural silk industry*.

Each of the countries represented at the Congress was invited to send a report to Lyons on the situation in its silk trades. These reports, translated into French and English, the official languages of the assembly, were communicated to all the delegations. The study matter was divided into thirteen sections, for which a corresponding number of committees were appointed. Before the Congress, the reports received from each country were examined by a representative of each Committee; each in turn established a general report on the subject within his province. These general surveys were again translated into French or English, printed and addressed to all the participants who were thus able to study them at their ease before the assembly. On arriving at Lyons, therefore, the delegates were perfectly acquainted with all aspects of the problems to be discussed, a procedure which greatly helped in the speedy advancement of the work in hand. At the Congress itself, each Committee discussed in detail the general report laid before it and adopted motions to be suggested to the Plenary Assembly. Mr. Verron, of Swiss nationality, was appointed President of the Silk Trade Section, and Mr. Stehli, head of the Swiss Delegation, was asked to prepare a general report on silk weaving.

After two days of very intense work at Lyons, during which the reports were discussed and the motions of the

different Committees adopted or modified, the Congress travelled to Paris. We may add that, before their departure, members were invited to a superb banquet given in their honour at Clos Vougeot by the «Chevaliers du Tastevin» Fraternity.

The constructive work continued in Paris and, as was only right, several social events were held in very distinguished settings. There was, for instance, a Gala Night at the Opera, on which occasion forty Parisian fashion houses presented two models each made entirely of natural silk; also a reception at Versailles in the Grand Trianon and a fashion parade of silk lingerie.

One of the main purposes of the International Silk Congress was to reconstitute the International Federation which had been jeopardized by the war. Nevertheless, it proved impossible to achieve this aim, because the political and economic structure of certain countries directly interested in the silk trades does not allow them to become members of a non-political organization. It has been possible, however, to create a new co-ordinating organism, known as the *International Silk Bureau*. Its President is Mr. Ariste Potton of Lyons, who also presided over the Congress; his General Secretary is Mr. Bonvallet, also of Lyons, to whose organizing talent was due the perfect success of the 1948 Congress. All the leaders of the national delegations have been appointed vice-presidents.

The International Silk Bureau will certainly not be content with a purely theoretical existence. Its inception has been so promising, its organization so carefully studied, that it offers a guarantee of very fruitful activity.

Already now, future developments have been anticipated: a Study Conference will take place in Zurich, in May 1949 (to unify the technicalities of testing and conditioning, and the classification of various grades of silk), to be followed in 1950 by an International Congress in New York, which should give excellent results, judging by the extraordinary interest shown by the United States in the Lyons meeting.

Meanwhile, work is going forward. The International Bureau is elaborating its statutes and programme. The latter is to include a *world-wide campaign promoting the utilization of pure silk* and as far as possible, the adoption of the motions voted by the Congress. Its chief object will be to defend the interests of the silk trade, by protecting the name of silk, protecting and codifying the different grades and removing discriminatory classification which causes silk to be considered as a luxury product heavily taxed by governments and Excise departments.

We shall no doubt have occasion to refer again to the activities of the International Silk Bureau when the conference is held next year in Zurich.

(Report by R. Chessex).