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BELGIUM AND SWITZELAND: EDUCATIVE ROLE
OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN SOLVING
THIS PROBLEM.

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Difficulties in Unionizing Migrants in Belgium and Switzerland:
Educative Role of Catholic Organizations in Solving this Problem.

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There is definitely no doubt about the fact that trade unionism today in numerous countries of intra-European migration such as Belgium, France, Germany, England and Switzerland constitutes the most direct and, considering its possible development, most important means of integrating migrants in the social life of the immigration countries.

In our opinion if, in fact, trade unionism is not yet so important in the above mentioned countries, this is owing to attendant factors which are probably due to disappear with the increasing development of trade unionism itself.

Trade unionism represents in the integration of adult immigrants what school represents in the assimilation of the first and second generation of an immigrant family. As a first and direct means of integration the trade union atmosphere is no doubt to be preferred over any other, be it

religious, political, assistential or recreational.

The importance attributed to trade unions derives from the very nature of present-day migration. Intra-European migration is in fact specifically "migration for work" (migrazioni di lavoro). The defense and protection of the migrant in the contractual order is the most effective means of removing him from the isolation in which he finds himself in the receiving country, for as long as his situation at work remains precarious it will constitute a strong obstacle to his religious and social integration.

It is significant that in the areas in which trade union activity is weak or lacking, the immigrants remain socially isolated and their integration encounters enormous obstacles.

It is certain that if (taking the U.S. as an example) from the very beginning of the great European immigration there had been a strong industrial trade unionism, such as that represented today by the C.I.O., the United States would have had valuable means of Americanizing the masses of immigrants from southern Europe, but this, in fact is totally missing; perhaps in that case the North American working-class would not have been so strongly and persistently opposed to foreign labor.

2. A significant historical lesson: the relation between trade unionism and immigration in the United States.

We deem it useful within the aim of our report to delve into a recent page of migration and trade union history: the American experience.

The beginning of the reaction of United States labor against foreign immigration started towards the middle of last century (1840-1850). From these first manifestations of the workers until the outbreak of the second World War (1940), this means approximately one century of history, the attitude of domestic manpower has been constantly opposed to immigration and constantly fighting against it.

There have been many attempts to explain and interpret this anti-immigration spirit of the American trade unions as an expression of labor protectionism common to the trade unions of all countries.

There is of course some truth in such a statement. We must not completely neglect, in interpreting the facts, certain factors, one of which deserves special mention: the occupational distribution of the immigrants and the lack of industrial trade unionism in America.

From 1908 to 1923, 6,908,900 immigrants entered the United States, of whom 26.4% were laborers, 25.1% farm hands and 24.0% without any occupation. This enormous mass of unskilled workers was absorbed mainly by three sectors of the economy: the extractive industry, metallurgy, and manufacturing; sectors which were not union organized. In 1920 foreigners constituted the 18.6% of the whole working population, 34.6% of the manpower employed in the mechanical industries and the 28% of those employed in the extractive industries.

In various industrial sectors foreigners and their children constituted the majority of the manpower employed.

These percentages serve to emphasize two serious problems created by European immigration in American trade union circles: that of the organization of industrial trade unions, which did not exist before, and that of the relations between occupational trade unions and the trade union organizations of an industrial type.

In the United States from 1890 to 1920 industrial trade unionism was still in the first stages of development and only the specialized trades were satisfactorily organized. The industrial branches of the steel and automobile industries were almost completely unorganized. Child labor, insufficient

salaries, 12 hour working days and altogether poor social conditions were widespread. In 1910, for instance, 51% of the employees of the Bethlehem steel works were working regularly 12 hours a day and 29% of them were working without any interruption every day of the whole week. If we consider the mentality and structure of the American trade unions at the end of last century and at the beginning of this one we shall understand what a paradoxal situation was that of the A.F. of L. regarding the unskilled industrial immigration from southern Europe: its structure was completely incapable of assimilating or integrating such influx of manpower. Numerous were the criticisms in Europe of the hostile attitude of the A.F. of L. towards unskilled immigration. The American delegates were repeatedly criticized, for instance at the International Socialist Congress held in Stuttgart in 1907 and at the International Conference of Christian Trade Unions held in Budapest in 1911 and in Zurich in 1919.

The problems of the union organization of foreign manpower in the United States were moreover aggravated by the great differences between the European and the American conception of the internal structure of organization and its particular purpose.

The great disparity between the conception of European immigrants in the United States and the pure and simple corporative unionism of the British workers which has so little in common with unionism of an industrial type; the fact, moreover, that the radical and socialist conceptions of the German immigrants differed so strongly from the anarchic and disorganized ones of the southern European immigrants - all this certainly did not help the American workers to be well disposed towards the immigrants.

If we were to pass judgment on these historical facts, it seems that the A.F. of L. might have used either of two means to prevent the immigration of unskilled workers from south-east Europe from becoming a threat or a weapon in the hands of the industrial capitalist groups. It might have extended its scope of action and changed its internal structure so as to render possible the incorporation of industrial immigrants into the proper trade unions, or helped the mass of unskilled workers to create an independent trade union organization of an industrial type.

Both these alternatives were rejected by the A.F. of L. on account of the complex and difficult organizatory, financial, ideological and psychological problems; the A.F. of L. preferred to keep its own structure and to solve the difficult

problem by an energetic campaign in the legislative field in order to obtain the almost complete exclusion of immigrant manpower, as in fact was the case in the period 1921-24.

This choice was a drastic one but nevertheless we must admit that in fact, although possible, it would have been difficult to solve the problem otherwise.

These facts do not enable us to derive any conclusion. It seems to us historically proved that owing to the lack of a real industrial trade unionism the United States have thus been lacking an important factor for the integration of immigrant foreign workers.

The problem of the initial social integration of unskilled workers ought to have been assumed by industrial trade unions. We must admit that its failure was not only due to a tactical error on the part of the trade union leaders of the A.F. of L. but to a large extent to a whole complex difficult of solution caused either by the corporative structure of American trade unions as well as by the specific character of European immigration, and its excessive mobility and ideological, ethnical, religious and linguistic diversity of these immigrants.

So this is why it is necessary to go into further detail concerning the difficulties existing in the various immigration countries between trade unions and foreign manpower.

3. Necessity for revision of the trade union policy on migration problems. The new historical situation.

The educational task of Catholic trade unions is evident in the field of international mobility as in all labor problems. The negative attitude of workers' organizations towards immigration is a well known fact, as is the difficulty certain trade unions encounter when they try to convince their members that the internal economic situation justifies the admission of a certain amount of immigration of foreign workers.

These difficulties and the various ways of solving them are treated in a report presented to this Congress by Mr. Attilio Oblath, Chief of the Migration Section of the I.L.O.

I will only take the liberty of remarking that certain trade union attitudes that might have been justified at the beginning of this century are no longer so today or at least not to the same extent. Trade unions of all the immigration countries must now re-examine their immigration policies in the light of the political and social changes of the decade.

The factors of major importance which should, in our opinion, induce the trade unions to adopt a new attitude are the following:

- 1) The appreciable progress in the social legislation of the immigration and traditional emigration countries.
- 2) The remarkable strengthening of agricultural and industrial trade unions in various countries of emigration.
- 3) Improved organizations of the trade unions in immigration countries.
- 4) The more objective and responsible attitude of the trade unions of the emigration countries. The action of trade unions at the present time is aimed at obtaining a greater amount of protection and security for the emigrated workers, better organization of the emigration services and the participation in their activity of delegates from trade unions. The Italian Internal Federation of Free Trade Unions has been very active in its efforts to draw international attention to the protection of emigrant manpower.
- 5) In the international field the bilateral or multilateral agreements signed by the various governments of emigration and immigration countries. Through these agreements the governments concerned have endeavoured to extend to their workers abroad the same security, stability and equality of rights as that of the local workers. In only five years from 1950 to 1954 Italy, for example, concluded with European countries

five emigration agreements (with Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg and the Saar) and nine social insurance and security agreements (with Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, the Saar and Switzerland). The degree of responsibility the government took in these agreements was demonstrated by the suspension of all emigration to Belgium after the continuous mining accidents last year. To these agreements must be added the 103 International Labor Agreements approved by I.L.O. from 1919 to 1954, most of which have been ratified by European countries.

6) The inclusion of immigration within the schemes for national and international economic development such as the Vanoni Plan, Schuman Plan, CECA and the OEEC, etc.)

7) The action accomplished by I.L.O. in the field of migration and in that of international mobility of manpower. - The recent creation of a permanent migration committee within the international C.I.S.L.

8) The new trend in the economic and social policies of European governments and the changes in the governmental institutions which have characterized the recent post-war period. The confidence in the automatic balance of economic and social forces has been almost completely abandoned.

- 9) The policy of demographic balance adopted by a few countries which suffer from a fairly pronounced imbalance among the various age groups of their population and must find a way out of this problem by solutions other than those deriving only from consideration of the labor market. For the good of the nation, the trade union policy cannot, for instance in France, be separated from the population policy.
- 10) A decrease in the disproportion between the levels of salaries, social security and the protective sanitation of the emigration and immigration countries.
- 11) The almost general trend in France, Belgium and Germany to favor not only the immigration of single workers but of entire family units, which, although it involves serious difficulties on the socio-economic level, (housing problems), diminishes the competition between the local and immigrant manpower.
- 12) The almost general abandonment by emigration countries of the sterile policy which consisted in an obstinate demand for free admission to countries of immigration which has been replaced by a better informed policy which places migration problems within the general framework of world economic co-operation. We are not speaking about the tendency of a single country but of the new awareness of a real need which has become obvious to all those who have objectively followed the development of economic, political and social relations between nations.

4. Examination of an historical fact: the change of attitude of Italian trade unions towards emigration.

Well-known is the struggle which opposed during the last century the president of the A.F. of L., Samuel Gompers, and the Italian trade union leaders who advocated the liberalization of emigration to the United States so as to unburden Italy's internal economic situation. Equally famous are the criticisms the European trade union delegates leveled against the American trade unions at the International Congresses of Stuttgart (1907) and of London (1926). There is no doubt that the language used nowadays by the Italian C.I.S.L. is quite different from that which used to be quite common in Italian trade union circles up to twenty-five years ago.

To be convinced of this it is sufficient to note the deliberations of the Italian C.I.S.L. either at the second Congress (Rome, July 23-27, 1955) or on the occasion of the survey carried out last year at the initiative of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community.

We quote these two documents:

"Noi (della CISL) non riteniamo che la liberalizzazione dei vari fattori produttivi e dei prodotti, di per sè sufficiente a garantire i benefici che si attendono dall'allargamento del mercato e dal superamento delle rigidità istituzionali costituite dalla frontiere economiche nazionali; anzi riteniamo che la liberalizzazione rischia, se non controllata nelle sue conseguenze e soprattutto se non intesa come semplice strumento e parte di una programmazione economica europea di integrazione e di sviluppo, di peggiorare gli squilibri esistenti alla rinascita delle zone più depresse.

Per la stessa ragione riteniamo che la semplice liberalizzazione della manod'opera non consenta i vantaggi sperati ed anzi sia pericolosa per un effettivo processo di integrazione europea.

Di fronte al semplicistico atteggiamento di molti ambienti responsabili de nostro paese, secondo i quali grande successo si realizza ogni volta che si riesce adumentare il contingentamento di emigrazione, noi abbiamo sempre manifestato una forte diffidenza. Ciò non solo per gli aspetti umani e sociali dell'emigrazione, che impongono un dovuto interessamento, ma anche sotto il profilo specificamente economico.

Ed è per questo che noi ci rendiamo perfettamente conto come numerosi movimenti sindacali di altri paesi, movimenti a

noi fratelli nella lotta per la difesa e il miglioramento delle condizioni dei lavoratori, abbiano rispetto al problema della libera circolazione della manod'opera, un atteggiamento quanto mai cauto e timoroso. Pur non potendo negare il principio stesso. E sarebbe quanto mai stolto da parte nostra, limitarci ad un sentimento di insoddisfazione o di protesta per il loro comportamento.

Oramai nessun problema europea può essere ben impostato e condotto a soluzione in base ad interessi sezionali, e così come riteniamo che la semplice apertura delle nostre frontiere al prodotto europeo non è di per sé fattore positivo di sviluppo, dobbiamo altresì riconoscere che la semplice apertura delle frontiere europee al lavoro italiano ugualmente non è di per sé fattore positivo di sviluppo.

Purtroppo nella nostra stessa organizzazione questo modo di vedere non è stato finora chiaramente assimilato.

Il problema della libera circolazione della manod'opera in Europa è un aspetto del problema politico-economico dell'organizzazione europea. Solo un potere soprazionale (nel caso della carbosiderurgia, la CESA) che abbia la volontà e la capacità di programmare lo sviluppo produttivo, può anche programmare i trasferimenti di manod'opera in seno alla comunità.

I sindacati europei debbono soprattutto porsi chiaramente il compito di individuare e sostenere una linea comune e tale linea non può essere, a nostro avviso, che fondata sul principio che i trasferimenti di manod'opera vanno condizionati alla presenza di una programmazione europea degli investimenti e della produzione ed a un calcolo preventivo e preciso, sia del fabbisgno di lavoro come della esuberanza di lavoro che si viene a creare in seguito alla preparazione del mercato comune.

I trasferimenti di manod'opera sono un momento della politica economica e sociale di un organismo super-nazionale, ed il ruolo unitario dei movimenti sindacali europei è quello di garantire la libertà e il benessere di coloro che sono interessati a tali trasferimenti.

Le disposizioni amministrative di restrizione all'impiego di lavoro straniero possono essere smantellate solo caso per caso, in presenza di operazioni i cui risultati siano previsti, controllati e programmati."

(Atti del 2° Congresso Nazionale CISL. Roma 23-27 aprile 1955 pp. 257-259).

"L'atteggiamento di principio assunto dalle organizzazioni sindacali riguardo all'emigrazione è abbastanza negativo e si sottolineano volentieri i casi più sfortunati. Sono molte le dichiarazioni dei dirigenti sindacali che considerano l'emigrazione come una soluzione di comodo, che impedisce la vera e propria riforma dell'economia interna...

I dirigenti sindacali della CISL esprimono il loro rammarico sull'atteggiamento abbastanza negativo sul piano sindacale di molti migranti, la cui unica preoccupazione è di costituirsi quanto prima una modesta riserva finanziaria o di provvedere ai bisogni della famiglia rimasta in Italia ... Ne deriva uno spirito di ricerca delle occasioni di guadagno che, non corretto dalla solidarietà verso i compagni, può degenerare in comportamenti anche sindacali (crumiraggio, ritmi accelerati di lavoro, ecc)."

Studi e Documenti. Ostacoli alla mobilità dei lavoratori e problemi sociali di riadattamento. CECA. pp. 124-125)

This language differs from that used before the last World War. And this is worth noting.

5. Another historical fact: the new attitude of North American trade unions towards immigration.

The new attitude adopted after the last war by the C.I.O and the A.F. of L. towards immigration has been remarked for some time by interested parties, their recent criticism of the McCarran-Walters Immigration Act of 1952, their advocacy of extension of the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 and the proposal made by their leaders for wiser and more just immigration legislation in the United States.

The revised attitude of American trade unions is justified not only by the above-mentioned fact of the recent development of industrial trade unions, but also by the progressive disappearance (causing a great change in the situation) of the social conditions that in the past rendered possible many abuses in the field of migration to the detriment of the American working class.

European trade unions in the immigration countries ought to study thoroughly the change in the American trade unions: perhaps they might find there a useful lesson for Europe as well.

To understand the new attitude of the trade unions it is necessary to recall the considerable changes which took place

in the juridical and social conditions of the American workers, particularly during the Roosevelt administration. It should not be forgotten that during the great period of European immigration from 1860 to 1920 the American trade unions were just beginning to be organized. There was no social legislation, either federal or local to protect the workers against the abuses of their employers. Any workers association always encountered the opposition of the employers, the tribunals, and the legislators. Quite often employers' organizations fomented rivalry between the various national groups of immigrants, preventing unity within the trade union by creating rival factions within the community of immigrant workers.

The radical changes that took place during the ten years of the New Deal and during the Truman administration have eliminated to a large extent the social conditions if not the circumstances which from the point of view of trade union policy provided grounds for opposition to the immigration of foreign workers.

The legislative control presently in effect in America, as for example the laws on child labor, minimum wages, the legal prohibition of the exploitation of workers and of unhealthy working conditions, the 40-hour work week, the protection of trade unions by anti-trust laws, as well as the powerful organization of industrial workers, have eliminated the main

dangers and abuses of the past.

Owing to the development of trade unions (their members presently number more than 16,500,000, whereas before 1900 there were not even 800,000) the wage levels in the great majority of occupational categories are controlled by the unions by means of collective contracts. The government itself has taken an active part in guaranteeing a satisfactory standard of living and of salaries. Unemployment insurances and other forms of social security have given the worker considerable protection. The government plan for an efficient economic production policy and a full employment program have diminished the danger caused by the disorganized immigration of the period 1870-1920.

Except for the particular problems rising from the illegal immigration of Mexican farm laborers, it may be stated that with present-day social legislation and trade union organization, the question of the possible unfavourable influence of migration upon salaries and living standards in the United States may be considered as solved.

Not all the economic and social systems of European countries have undergone the enormous transformation of the American ones. It is worthwhile to stress the importance of an objective review of the new economic and social situation in Europe in

connection with an enlightened migration policy for the trade unions.

6. Attitude of the Belgian trade unions towards the immigration of foreign manpower.

The survey carried out last year under the initiative of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community among the following trade unions: Confédérations des Syndicats Chrétiens (C.S.C.) Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (F.G.T.B.), Centrale des Francs Mineurs (C.F.M.), Centrale Syndicale des Travailleurs des Mines de Belgique (S.C.T.M.B.), Centrale Chrétienne des Métallurgistes de Belgique (C.C.M.B.) and the Centrale des Métallurgistes de Belgique (C.M.B.) has uncovered attitudes which will be taken up in the points which follow:

- (1) Toutes les organisations reconnaissent que cette immigration est nécessaire afin de pallier la pénurie de main d'oeuvre observée dans certains secteurs de l'economie belge.
- (2) Elles demandent cependant à surveiller de près cette immigration, particulièrement par la voie de la commission tripartite de la main d'oeuvre étrangère. Les syndicats veulent en effet vérifier si toutes les possibilités d'occuper des travailleurs nationaux ont été épuisées, contrôler si l'afflux des immigrants ne risque pas de nuire à la main d'oeuvre belge et veiller à ce que l'immigration et la mise au travail des étrangers

s'effectuent dans des conditions satisfaisantes.

(3) Tous les syndicats souhaitent que les travailleurs étrangers bénéficient en Belgique des mêmes avantages que les travailleurs nationaux tant dans leur intérêt propre que dans l'intérêt de la main d'oeuvre belge, qu'ils concurrenceraient sinon dans des conditions inégales. En certains domaines tels que le logement, cette assimilation sera nécessairement progressive. Le logement des immigrants doit toutefois encore être amélioré, surtout si, comme la C.S.C. notamment le souhaite, on cherche à favoriser en Belgique l'installation des familles d'immigrants. Les Centrales de mineurs insistent par ailleurs sur la nécessité de mesures d'initiation au travail à l'intention des immigrants.

(4) Aucun syndicat n'admet en revanche que les immigrants jouissent à quelque égard d'une situation privilégiée par rapport à celle des nationaux. Le problème de l'interprétation des stipulations des contrats à durée déterminée en vertu desquels les étrangers mineurs ont été embauchés a été évoqué à ce sujet dans chaque interview. Pour aucun syndicat les immigrants ne tirent de ce contrat le droit de rester au travail en cas de licenciement de la main d'oeuvre belge.

(5) Les deux grandes confédérations, l'une à l'échelle de la Centrale des Mineurs l'autre à l'échelle même de la confédération, ont instauré un service spécialement chargé du contact avec les étrangers travailleurs immigrés.

Toutes les organisations reconnaissent cependant que la participation des étrangers à la vie syndicale et particulièrement le nombre des affiliés stables est très faible. La situation est cependant un peu meilleure dans la métallurgie que dans les mines, et suivant les organisations chrétiennes elle tend généralement à s'améliorer.

(6) Toutes les organisations déplorent le manque d'intérêt des étrangers pour la vie syndicale notamment en raison du mécontentement qu'il suscite chez les travailleurs belges.

(CECA report already quoted French text pp 118 & 119)

Concrete difficulties between the Belgian trade unions and the integration of foreign manpower in the trade unions.

The observations made by the Belgian trade unions concerning the lack of participation and interest of foreigners in trade

obvious
union activities reflect no doubt an fact. This particular situation seems to us attributable to the following causes:

a) The ideological, political and confessional features of the two main trade unions, the F.G.T.B. (socialist) and the C.S.C. (Christian) which often include in their programs internal political questions like, for instance, the school policy, which is a vital and burning question for Belgian Catholics today, and the struggle on the trade union level against the socialist government. This, in fact, forces foreign workers to devote their activities not only to controversies concerning work and contracts but also to purely political and ideological questions.

Now one must not forget that, although confessional trade union activities on the plurality of trade unions might be called for in Belgium by circumstances there, it clashes with the mentality and psychology of the immigrant, at least at the beginning of his assimilation, period during which he is most in need being helped by trade unions as a means of integration.

By nature an immigrant is diffident because of the precariousness of his legal status of "alien" and often also because of the instability of his working contract. He is therefore unwilling to take up any kind of activity that might, rightly or wrongly, be considered not merely as the expression of liberty of thought, but as illegal political activity. Many immigrants are afraid of misusing their freedom or of taking a responsibility by becoming members of a trade union. This psychology is most acute for instance also among the Italian immigrants to our neighboring country, France, especially since the ^{bitter} experiences of the fascist period.

There is found among them a real phobia for all that might be considered political. Moreover many are afraid of being forced to repatriate.

How can Italian immigrants react favorably when confronted, for example, in Belgium with programs (like the Christian one) which include in their platform the struggle to make the socialist government fall?

Let us remark that, in our opinion, this accounts

from
to a great extent for the fact that 1946 till today
40,000 Italian miners have successively given their
names to the C.S.C., but have ceased to adhere to it
a few months later, with the result that at the pre-
sent time the number of immigrants on the union rol-
ls totals only a little more than 3,000 throughout
Belgium. Likewise, the Italian immigrants enrolled
in the F.G.T.B. constitute only a small minority:
approximately 800.

b) The legal obstacle to organized cooperation
between Italian Christian and free trade unions. It
is an indisputable fact that the trade union organi-
zation of Italian immigrants in Belgium is strongly
hindered by the paradoxical situation existing in the
international field between the Belgian C.S.C. and
the Italian C.I.S.L.

The C.I.S.L. at the present time is the only free
Italian federation of trade unions having a Christian
orientation within the international C.I.S.L. The o-
ther federations affiliated to the International C.I.S.L.,

as, for example, the F.G.T.B., have a specifically socialist orientation.

How nowadays could organized cooperation in the unionizing of Italian emigrants be obtained between the C.I.S.L. and C.S.C. or even between the C.I.S.L. and the F.G.T.B.? Cooperation between the C.I.S.L. and the C.S.C. would rightfully provoke a reaction from the F.G.T.B. on the international level; on the other hand, cooperation between the C.I.S.L. and the F.G.T.B. is just as problematic because of the understandable criticism from the C.S.C. that cooperation with an openly socialist trade union would provoke.

Keeping in mind the fact that Italian immigrants constitute the highest percentage, especially in the mines, of foreign manpower in Belgium, it is easy to understand the negative influence exerted by this state of affairs on the trade organization of the immigrants

c) The lack of a free and non-confessional trade union in Belgium, and of Christian trade union in Italy.

Let us remark that various historical circumstan

ces in Belgium have led to the creation of an explicitly trade union while in Italy different motives have prompted Catholics to favor a neutral, non-confessional trade unionism.

Whatever might be said about the greater or lesser advantages of these differing situations, one fact remains certain; the differences in the structure of the trade unions of the two countries are not a positive factor in the solution of our problem, which is aggravated by the differences in the trade union mentality and training between the Italian immigrants and the local workers thus creating difficulties in the transfer of trade union membership from one country to the other. The immigrant worker does not always recognize the trade union organization as he knew it in his own country.

Experience does not indicate that Italian workers become members of the C.S.C. through the Italian association A.C.L.I., which is to say that the above-mentioned situation remains unchanged. As a matter of fact, in the beginning A.C.L.I. was

sent to Belgium to develop trade union activity in conjunction with the C.S.C. The A.C.L.I.-C.S.C. collaboration lasted till the end of 1954 and was broken for two reasons:

1) because the leaders of the C.S.C., who had interpreted the agreement signed in Rome as involving purely trade union activity on the part of the members of A.C.L.I., deplored the fact that they also were more or less assisting unaffiliated workers, and for this reason were the first to cancel the agreement that had been made with Mr. Storchi in 1946;

2) because the members of the A.C.L.I. had become aware of the fact that, probably for the above-mentioned reasons, only a very small minority of Italians were actually joining the C.S.C. and therefore it would have been disastrous for the Italian emigration to Belgium not to carry out completely the Italian A.C.L.I. program which ^{extends} its social assistance to all in order to create a real workers' community. In considering the relations between A.C.L.I. and the C.S.C., I think we must not overlook a significant fact: in 1948 when in Italy a choice had to be made between neutral or

confessional trade unions, almost all the members of A.C.L.I. (580,000 against 40,000) who represented the Christian element within the C.G.I.L. (Marxist and fellow-travelling) opted for free and non confessional trade unions. Without doubt is a fact which indicates a mentality that might contrast with the ^{Belgian} mentality of the trade unions.

d) The responsible role of the trade unions which have not always approached the problems constructively, for although the foremen of an enterprise are generally Italian if they are supposed to supervise Italian workers, there are almost no trade union leaders chosen from among the emigrants (Report of the CECA, 124-125). Silicosis, although it is specifically the illness that miners contract underground, has not yet been recognized as an occupational disease: the laws concerning work accidents are not up to date. It is to be remarked that particularly the F.G.T.B. is unwilling to act in favor of the emigrants for fear of compromising the present socialist government.

Take this one example:

The negative attitude of the government on the

subject of mining reforms after the catastrophe of Marcinelle - a fact which would be ample justification for a good many strikes - has not led to the success of any attempts of labor to call a strike because the socialist trade union does not want to compromise its own government.

e) The high membership dues which amount 10 to 20 times the rather low and often only nominal ones paid in Italy (CECA Report

f) The lack of a trade union mentality and training among a certain group of immigrants. This is often the case with workers of rural origin, more individualistic and less aware of the assistance trade unions can give them through defensive and informative action. In our opinion this difficulty, real as it is, could be overcome. The workers from southern Italy and the Italian farm laborers have also proved that they can become trade union conscious and can come to realize the advantages to be accrued - quite apart from any idea of solidarity - in becoming members of a trade union. In the CECA report already often quoted, it is remarked that the majority of I-

Italian trade unions declared themselves satisfied at the behavior of southern workers employed in northern Italy, especially as far as the trade unions are concerned. (CECA report. p. 123). The report furthermore points out a fact that has recently appeased the German trade unions: it is true that some of the emigrant Italian agricultural workers in Germany have been striking on their own account in order to obtain a raise in salary and trying to persuade the German agricultural workers to do likewise. These are of course isolated cases, but nevertheless they must not be neglected.

g) The desire to return home, even though it is not a wish that can come true within the ^{near} future, slows the effort at integration within the trade union. A recent survey has uncovered the fact that 69% of the married Italian workers in Belgium and the 78% of the bechalors wish to return to Italy. It is a known fact that the number of yearly repatriations among the Italians working in Belgium is almost equal to the number of newcomers. In a metallurgical industry in the vicinity of Liège immediately after the last war, the

average length of employment of Italian workers was 13 months within a period of three years.

If from an ethnical and racial viewpoint this immigration only causes difficulties of minor importance owing to the fact that these immigrants do not remain in the immigration country, the matter appears quite different from the economic and social viewpoints. Economic because the savings of these workers return with them to the homeland, and social - because, since they do not stay in the immigration country, the immigrants are less interested in trade unions and in the interests of the local workers. Even this difficulty might, in our opinion, be solved by cooperation between the unions of the emigration countries and those of Belgium.

These seem to us be the main practical reasons for the rather negative attitude of the immigrants towards trade unions, an attitude which causes mistrust of foreign manpower on the part of the national workers and their delegates.

8. Final Suggestions:

To solve the above-mentioned difficulties we pro-

pose the following suggestions:

- 1) As expressly suggested by Mr. Attilio Oblath in his report presented to this congress, it is necessary having vanquished certain difficulties of a politico-trade union character, to establish interaction among the trade unions in Belgium and Italy. An inter-trade union organization at the present time in Belgium is a necessity if problems of the relations between immigrants and trade unions are to be solved. It falls to the International C.S.C. to put it self in immediate contact with the permanent committee of the International C.I.S.L. and to study the means of creating in Belgium an inter-trade union organization in which Catholic would also be members.
- 2) It is well that the action of A.C.L.I. should remain distinct from teh trade union activity of the C.S.C., both because of the different activities of these two organizations, the first being an assistance agency and the other "contractual" and "arbritative", and because of the A.C.L.I. program which in practice does well to extend beyond the sphere of a trade union.
- 3) It would be most appropriate that A.C.L.I. should

assume the educational task of preparing the Italian emigrants to this trade union pluralism. Although this would not be the main reason for its presence in Belgium, an educational activity in this field would nevertheless be most advisable. The same might be done in Italy with prospective emigrants.

4) It is necessary for the leaders of the C.S.C. to take more into account the very real psychological difficulties the immigrants have in accepting the political and confessional activities of their trade unions.

5) It is wished that the C.S.C. would adopt a more constructive attitude towards immigrants and their contractual rights. Greater readiness of immigrants to become members of the trade unions depends on trade union activities turned more in their favor. This is why we suggest that in every coal mining area there should ^{be} trade union organizers of the same nationality as the migrants.

9. The situation in Switzerland: the attitude of trade unions towards foreign immigration. Difficulties in unionizing immigrant manpower.

In Switzerland we certainly do not find the numerous and serious difficulties found in Belgium as far as trade unions are concerned. However, it cannot be said that the unionizing of immigrant manpower in Switzerland is altogether of a positive character.

In Switzerland first of all Christian trade unions have neither the force nor influence they have in Belgium. With their enrollment of about 75,000 members, the Christian trade unions are greatly outnumbered by the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions of socialist tendencies, which is a member of the Federation of Free Trade Unions and is the largest of the trade union organizations by reason of its 400,000 members. In some industrial cantons such as Zurich, Bern, Basle and Geneva, the Christian trade unions rank definitely below the neutral ones, but on the other hand they are well organized in the Catholic and less industrialized cantons such as Fribourg, Ticino and the Valais.

Also in the Swiss trade unions there exists, though much less than in Belgium, a problem deriving from the pluralism of trade unions. There are also Switzerland trade unions that declare themselves neutral and socialist.

One of the strongest trade unions, that includes in certain cantons several thousand seasonal immigrants, is, for instance, the F.O.B.B. (Fédération Suisse des ouvriers sur bois et du bâtiment) which as a professional organization, belongs to the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions, and which, although theoretically it is supposed to be neutral in the fields of religion and politics has a markedly socialist orientation. 98 per cent of Italian masons and laborers working in the Canton of Geneva (more than 4,500 immigrants) are members of the cantonal F.O.B.B.

The instruction of the immigrants in confessional trade unionism is also partly a problem in Switzerland. The total lack of a political action, however, renders the problem there easier to solve.

Various difficulties are presented by the Christian trade unions in unionizing the emigrants. These often vary according to the specific economic and religious state of affairs in the various cantons.

Generally speaking the present difficulties may be enumerated as follows:

- a) The complete absence of trade unions in the hotel industry and domestic service. This lack affects immigration of Italian women, 42.3 per cent of whom are domestics and 24.2 per cent of whom work in hotels. The hotel industry also absorbs 6.2 per cent of the Italian manpower.
- b) The almost complete lack of union organization in agriculture. However, 42 per cent of the entire immigration of Italian men in Switzerland and the 23.4 per cent of the women are employed in agriculture. The difficulties encountered in unionizing agricultural manpower are many: in certain cantons these are particularly serious. This fact generally hinders the agricultural immigrants's social integration.

c) The actual lack of real trade union freedom for foreigners. We may remark for instance the unjustified pressure, contrary to the freedom of trade unions, exerted by the F.O.B.B. upon the Italian seasonal immigrants in the Canton of Geneva. Most of the immigrants become members of the trade unions for fear of not being able otherwise to obtain the renewal of their working contract the following year. Also in other cantons foreign workers generally become trade union members because they are told that their presence in Switzerland depends on their affiliation to a trade union. This fact has even been mentioned in a report on problems concerning the families of emigrant workers which was presented by Jean Jeker at the Congress of the International Union of Family Organizations in Milan June 7-10.

d) The lack of trade union training among some of the groups of immigrant workers. It is a fact that spirit of exploiting every opportunity for gain often perverts the attitude of the emigrants on the subject of trade unions. Quite often they take up activities (strike-breaking or working without permits, etc.) which break all solidarity with the local labor force. But as has

already been said concerning the situation in Belgium, there is no need to exaggerate these difficulties. The Italian provinces which provide the greatest number of migrants are all situated in districts in which industrial and agricultural trade union organization at the present time is sufficiently developed: Belluno, Udine, Bergamo, Treviso, Brescia, Varese, Vicenza, Sondrio, Trento, Verona, Novara, Padova, Aosta and Como.

e) The temporary and seasonable character of emigration to Switzerland (hotel service, construction and public works, agriculture). The annual rate of Italian emigration to Switzerland during the last five years has averaged more than 150,000 units.

f) The clandestine character of some of the labor immigration, which leads these workers to accept any condition of work and to avoid any contact with trade unions for fear of being repatriated because of their illegal status. On the whole these cases are rather rare.

g) The lack, at least in some cantons, of a constructive attitude on the part of Christian trade unions towards immigrant manpower.

Generally speaking, the Christian Labor Federation for construction and wood workers has completely neglected the problem of providing appropriate housing conditions for these workers. This problem is rather acute for instance in the Canton of Geneva where it is known to us that a recent agreement on this matter has been concluded between Mr. Tronchet, President of the F.O.B.B. and Mr. Palozzi, representative in Geneva of the Italian C.I.S.L., for the construction of quite a number of housing units for the Italian seasonal workers. There is a general lack among Swiss Christian workers of awareness for the facts concerning the living conditions of foreign workers and the advisability of integrating them into the workers' organizations.

Certain ^{trade} union circles also complain about a certain lack of interest and activity of the local clergy. This may derive from the fact that the sectors in which the seasonal migrant workers are employed are generally sectors abandoned by local manpower and therefore not considered as interesting to supervise.

h) At last we may mention among the causes of misunderstanding between the trade unions and the immigrants

the policy favoring the employers which exists in certain areas and which obviously relies upon foreign manpower to avoid having to raise the level of salaries. This induces painful friction among the workers. In the above-mentioned report presented by Jean Jekere last June it is stated that owing to this policy in a certain part of Switzerland there are elements so hostile to foreign workers that the latter are compelled to remain confined to themselves. Jean Jeker proposes, for instance as a remedy to this situation to proportion the granting of an immigration visa to Switzerland for the purpose of working to the lack of Swiss manpower and not to replace the local labor force which abandons a given sector of the economy or a certain kind of work because of the low pay.

In order to solve these difficulties we suggest:

- 1) A greater effort on the part of Christian trade unions to organize hotel and domestic service and agricultural labor. A thorough examination of the specific difficulties of organizing these fields is indicated. We believe that the lack of interference by other trade unions in this field is a positive factor.

- 2) A more constructive way of defending the interests of immigrant manpower, such, for instance, as the housing of the temporary construction workers. It might be useful in this matter to give some Christian trade unionists appropriate instruction on the migration problems of certain cantons and to establish a contact between them and the immigrant manpower.
- 3) A more organic defense of the de facto freedom of trade unions for foreign workers.