

## THE INTERNATIONAL DENTAL FEDERATION.

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„In any case, it is necessary to have broad-minded and liberal ideas.”

In January of this year there assembled at Paris fifteen of our colleagues, all more or less prominent in the dental world, to exchange views as to whether it was or was not advisable to re-establish international relations between dental circles in the various countries.

The result of their discussions, which were fully published, were thus summed up by these colleagues:

„The members of the French and the Belgian national dental Federations, assembled at Paris on the 10th January 1920, with a view to discussing the utility of maintaining the advantages which the International Dental Federation has procured for the dental profession and for mankind in general since the year 1900;

„Submit the following recommendations:

„1.) It is at present impossible to continue the regular meetings of the I. D. F., on pre-war conditions, appealing to all nations;

„2.) It is desirable that the I. D. F. should continue its beneficent action, with its statutes and regulations, but without admitting, for the present, to its meetings the representations of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria) and by receiving only the representatives of the allied and associated nations, and of neutral countries.”

We take the liberty of offering a few remarks with respect

to this proposal, unanimously carried, and with respect to the discussions which preceded it. We admit beforehand, that we were conscious of disappointment and annoyance on reading the communication sent us. In the meantime, however, we think we have more control over our feelings than the composers of that document, and we think, too, we shall be able to arrive at a more unprejudiced judgment than theirs, as to what the I. D. F. will have to be and to do in the future.

The fifteen gentlemen above-mentioned, were delegates of the national organisations of Belgium and France.

What sort of spirit is it, which inspires their discussions?

We do not hesitate to declare that it is a spirit of intolerance of vindictiveness, of narrow-mindedness.

Mons. *Blatter*, of Liège, employs in his opening speech the beautiful words which stand at the head of this article as a motto, but the assembly shows that, for the present, it is not susceptible to „broad-minded and liberal ideas.” Mons. *Rosenthal* (*this* generation of the family is Belgian) reads aloud an extensive memorandum, from which we cite a few passages: —

„The relations we should be able to maintain with the representatives of the Central Powers would have, at present, no character but that of reciprocal mistrust; and, if they participated in them, our gatherings would be painful for everyone, to such a degree that it is doubtful whether they could even take place. It is even probable that, if we admitted these representatives among us, a good number of our allied colleagues would refuse to join in any occupations at which they took part.”

„How long a time must still elapse before, amicably and fraternally, we can extend our hand to a German and welcome him without suspicion or reticence; especially when, ignorant or hypocritical, far from recognising their fault, far from uttering a *'mea culpa,'* their defeat has only increased their vanity, excited their anger, intensified their cries for vengeance?”

"Under these circumstances, my dear colleagues, our line of action is clearly traced. We have to give the assurance that in our congresses, in our gatherings, no creature secretly hostile to humanity, for which we take pains and sacrifice our time, shall be present; to the enemies of society we refuse the honour of co-operating with us in the work undertaken for bettering and raising it; and this prohibition shall take the form of a protection against contamination, which might infect us with the virus of their diseased mentality."

These extracts, indeed, render pretty faithfully the mentality of the Belgian colleagues present at the meeting.

From a letter of *Brophy's*, also read aloud at this conference, it appears that the Americans are anxious for the international conference to be held at Madrid in 1921, as was resolved at London in 1914. The Americans desire that "*in every country, a commission of preparation shall be immediately appointed.*"

The English gave *no sign* whatever. On account of illness, *Guerini* remained at Rome. The neutrals were not invited. The French displayed more moderation and reserve than the Belgians, but allowed themselves to be carried away by the latter, who, in this matter at least, exhibit an enormous stomatological capacity.

So it comes, that this small group, impelled by sentiments which we consider very natural, but cannot therefore admit as arguments, is driving matters to a crisis.

To begin with, we should like to ask them whence they derive the right to take such a tone. In the war, no doubt, Belgium rendered the Entente-powers important services, and it is quite intelligible that, in the conduct of politico-economic negotiations, it requires certain compensations on this account. Belgium, however, has not the right to open its mouth wide as regards all other matters, and organise a general hue and cry. In more than one respect Belgium is trying to do this; at present, in the sphere of scientific life. Does dentistry owe so much to Belgium, that it may now endeavour

to place the second native-country of the American Miller, (where he laid the foundations of a considerable part of our modern science) beyond the pale of our intellectual communion?

May the French allow themselves to be imposed upon by this bigoted and masterful outcry?

We desire to draw the attention of our Latin colleagues to one or two points.

Yes! just our Latin colleagues; who surely, for the greater part, will not question the authority of the writer whom we are about to quote.

"Therefore, to repeat once more what we wrote at the beginning, we request and entreat first of all our sons, all without exception, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that they will forget and banish from their hearts all hatred and insults, and that they may remain united by the most holy bands of Christian love, from which no one may withdraw himself."

This is directed to you, brothers, by His Holiness Pope Benedictus XV, in his last Encyclical.

Do you regard this as "a somewhat idealistic conception?" Has this command no validity for you, who are so desirous "to get down to a solid basis of reality?"

Well, then; the Ministry for the restoration of French industry issued, as early as October 1919, a circular, in which the manufacturers were requested to limit their purchases in England and America to the very minimum. The ministry desired them "*to disregard their very natural objections, and to apply to the German or Austrian purveyors.*" Banque et Bourse (the Parisian financial paper) congratulates the government on this measure, and writes: —

"We have no right to cherish a certain hyper-sensitiveness, and how-ever strongly there still lives within us the contempt for the enemy of yesterday, on account of the way in which he carried on the war, nevertheless our interest ought to help us over these feelings. For

our friends have shown us the way. Has it not been already noticed in several quarters, that they were acting on the same principles? A great number of products which we obtained from them, they had bought in Germany. These articles were sent on to us, and the rates of exchange thereby ensured to the English and Americans large profits."

Such are the conclusions of your leaders in spiritual and in material matters. The one with an idealism that far transcends your ideology; the others with a business-like cynicism, in which there is no place for your notions. They exhort you, both on ethical, and on well-considered material grounds, to cease from hate and discord.

The working-classes, the labouring hands of the peoples, of all countries and of all political and religious colours, — these have girded themselves anew to the restoration of their international associations.

The Pope's words issue from the souls of the best among us.

Will you, who at all events claim to belong to the intellectual kernel, to the backbone of the nations, will you remain standing alone?

Would you harden your hearts and becloud your minds with a phraseology which in the course of history will cover you with its contempt?

Then all you of the Anglo-Saxon tongue; you, who say you went to war for the sake of Justice! Not against the German *people* did you wish to fight, but against the German militarism, caecarism and Junker-tum.

Will you turn justice into injustice? Will you boycott workers in the vineyard of science, just because they are Germans?

And you, all the "neutrals," surely now you will have to aim at the highest neutrality, and stand out above the points

of difference. We know we are supported by the whole of the dental profession in Holland when we call upon you to raise, with us, your voice against the ill-omened intention of the Belgian colleagues, against ostracism on scientific ground, against keeping open the wounds which have been given, and for the complete restoration of international ties.

B. R. B.