



Charles F. L. Nord

1911—1951

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Honorary President of the F.D.I.

It will, I think, be generally agreed that Dr. Charles Nord is one of the most distinguished dentists now living. The catholicity of his professional interests, the originality of his approach to any subject under discussion, combined with a clear grasp of its essentials, the sincerity of his expressed opinions, the breadth of his education, the gift of lucid and concise utterance in several languages, joined to a capacity for long hours of continuous work of high quality would put him amongst the leaders of any profession he might have chosen. In the F.D.I. he has gained the admiration and confidence of his colleagues, whilst the generosity of his temperament and a genius for making friends, have won their affection and esteem.

It has been my good fortune, as a member of the Executive Committee, a Member of the Bureau, from 1945 to 1947 as the President of the F.D.I. and since that date as Honorary President, to enjoy twenty-eight years of unbroken friendship with Nord. During the whole of that time, my affectionate regards for Nord have never altered and we have been in complete agreement upon the principles of dentistry and the objective of the F.D.I., although we may have had some slight difference in the methods of obtaining this objective.

In 1936, a special number of the „Tijdschrift voor Tandheekunde” was compiled and presented to Nord on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee as a dentist.

This delightful souvenir of 413 pages was composed entirely of articles by seventy-five Dutch and Foreign Colleagues and was offered to Nord as a tribute of their affectionate regards. Inter alia, it afforded a comprehensive survey of Nord's activities in the field of international dentistry up to that time.

It is my privilege to narrate and perhaps to try and assess the value of the reciprocal relations between Nord and the F.D.I. taken as a whole.

Since the F.D.I., with the exception of the Red Cross of Geneva, is the only international scientific organisation that has withstood the disintegrating and demoralising influence of two Worlds Wars, it may reasonably be described as a unique association. It would

seem, however, that to appreciate fully what the F.D.I. owes to N o r d and why he has been satisfied to make these sacrifices of time and money and energy in order to support it, it is necessary to add a few remarks on the objectives of the F.D.I. and how it has succeeded in attracting so many of the leaders in dentistry to its support.

In the first place the men who founded the F.D.I. and who have kept it alive have been, almost without exception, men of character and broad culture, individualists, leaders of dentistry in their own country, the most progressive men in the profession and most important of all, they were practical idealists.

As practical men their immediate purpose was to establish and to maintain an association or permanent union of National Dental Societies with the appropriate officers or Executive Council and Scientific Commissions, meeting annually to make preparations for International Congresses at regular intervals.

As idealists proud of their profession, irrespective of financial or social position, their objective was to elevate the status of the profession by stimulating progress in dental science with the ultimate aim of improving world dental health. The whole Federation has been run on voluntary basis, and thus that commercial or political element, which has wrecked so many international endeavours, has been eliminated.

The leitmotiv of this organisation was disinterested service and it afforded the pre-essentials of all harmonious international activity, viz. personal contact and mutual understanding leading to personal friendship, which in their turn engendered personal confidence.

N o r d's first contact with international dentistry was at the Annual Session of the F.D.I. at the „Pulchri Studio” in the Hague, August 1912. It is not difficult for anyone who knows N o r d, to understand how congruous the spirit of the F.D.I. was with his own, and how soon he felt among friends. The members of the Federation were equally pleased with their „young recruit”. In addition to his zeal for his profession, his unflinching courtesy was greatly appreciated, especially by the older members, and his remarkable linguistic abilities opened many doors.

N o r d brought to the F.D.I. a great sympathy and understanding of the British and a warm affection for the Americans, and what was moreover lacking in both Americans and British, a wide knowledge of the historical background of Continental nations, and their outlook on life. This gradually developed into a sort of second sense and helped on many occasions to solve thorny problems.

The following year found him at the VIth Congress in London

and since then he has never missed an Annual Meeting or an F.D.I. Congress right up to the present day.

After two days, the London Congress was broken up by War, and the next meeting was an unofficial one at the Hague in September 1921 in which N o r d and V a n H a s s e l t at once made their mark by pleading strongly for the abandonment of the war hatred and the resumption of the spirit of peace amongst members of all nations. An unbroken series of annual meetings continued for 18 years. 1922 Madrid, 1923 Paris, 1924 Luxemburg, 1925 Geneva, 1926 Philadelphia, 1927 Copenhagen, 1928 Cologne, 1929 Utrecht, 1930 Brussels, 1931 Paris, 1932 Zurich, 1933 Edinburgh, 1934 Como, 1935 Brussels, 1936 Vienna, 1937 Stockholm, 1938 Paris, 1939 Zurich.

In 1922, at Madrid, N o r d and V a n H a s s e l t attended as Dutch representatives on the Executive Council and he was appointed Joint Secretary with G e o r g e V i l l a i n, a position he held till 1931, when he became Secretary General until 1947, when he relinquished the post of Secretary for that of President. In addition to these onerous offices, he was Reporter for the Legislation Commission and took an active part in the recasting of Statutes and Rules for the 1931 Congress. From 1929—1931, he was Secretary of the Commission of the Dental Press and also President of the Commission of Terminology, presenting a report on the nomenclature of Parodontose at the Paris Congress. During these years of almost incredible activity, he has not only conducted a large dental practice, but has taken a leading part in the activities of organised dentistry in Holland and attended many meetings of foreign societies. Since 1931, N o r d has been the mainspring of the organisation and activities of the Federation; his organising abilities have been fully appreciated by the Bureau and by all those who have worked with him. As G e o r g e V i l l a i n remarked when he was President, „collaboration with N o r d becomes a pleasure, the work is easy, since N o r d assumes so large a share of it”. The election of L o g a n as President put an added burden on the General Secretary, especially after the tragic death of G e o r g e V i l l a i n in 1938, but in spite of this irreparable loss, the preparations for the 1941 Congress in London were well on the way at Zurich in 1939, when World War II brought the harmonious activities of the F.D.I. to a standstill for the second time.

One of N o r d's most valuable achievements which was nipped in the bud, by the advent of war, and which is deserving of special mention, is the International Dental Journal.

For many years before the Second World War, N o r d recognis-

ed the great importance of a Journal for the F.D.I. in place of the Bulletin, which he edited from 1926 until 1947. It was in large measure due to N o r d's individual efforts that an International Journal was actually in print at the time when the 1939 war broke out which put an end to all our international activities. The International Dental Journal now so brilliantly edited by Professor H u b e r t S t o n e s may be regarded as a second edition of the one founded by N o r d in 1939 in collaboration with the three Swiss Editors.

After Zurich came the second and more terrible World War. But as soon as the occupied countries were freed, steps were at once put on foot by his old colleagues, to awaken the spirit of the F.D.I. which had laid dormant during the war years, and the first question we all asked was: „What about C h a r l e s N o r d? Is he all right in health and spirits, and most important of all, is he prepared to cooperate in the re-establishment of the F.D.I.?” To our immense relief we found him full of energy and, with his belief in the inestimable value of the F.D.I. to dentistry and to the world in general, unshaken by the terrible years of occupation and ready to cooperate with his old colleagues in a post-war world.

As acting President at that time, I can state categorically that without the advice, knowlegde and experience and the generous sacrifice of time, energy and money on the part of N o r d, the re-establishment of the F.D.I. would have been an impossible task.

It was obvious to all that new Articles must be drawn up to meet the new circumstances of a post-war world, N o r d was particularly helpful in stressing the necessity of an International Congress at the earliest possible moment and accordingly it was, once again, N o r d who stepped into the breach. He flew over to the U.S.A. visited Dr B u r k h a r t, our Hon. President, and was received by the Board of Trustees. Here he made such a good impression that he returned with the promise of an invitation for the F.D.I. to organize an International Dental Congress at Boston in 1947.

It was hoped to have an American as our first Post-War President but the deaths of L o g a n and B u r k h a r t and the demoralization of the F.D.I. machinery in the States during the war, made this election impossible for the A.D.A. Accordingly much against his will, N o r d was prevailed upon to accept the office of President which his long and faithful service to the F.D.I. so well deserved.

After the war, meetings were resumed. 1946 Paris, 1947 Boston, 1948 Dublin, 1949 Milan, 1950 Paris and 1951 is arranged for Brussels.

Once again the F.D.I. has the benefit of Nord's advice and experience and he is once again giving voluntary service not as Secretary but as President.

It is a remarkable achievement to have occupied such a leading position and played such an important part in this unique international organization which for 50 years has exercised a major influence on all real worth-while progress in dentistry. Looking back on his 38 years association with the F.D.I. must of necessity bring to his mind the many friends and colleagues who have passed away and can never be replaced, but we would ask him to look around him and take comfort from the presence of many younger colleagues whom he has inspired with the international spirit, both in his own country and abroad.

That is his greatest achievement of all.