

THE THIRTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ACTUARIES

THE Thirteenth International Congress of Actuaries took place by invitation of the Actuarieel Genootschap (Dutch Actuarial Society) at Scheveningen, Holland, from Thursday 7 June to Tuesday 12 June 1951. It was attended by about 650 actuaries, from twenty-six countries, accompanied by over 400 ladies. Actuaries from Great Britain (including members both of the Institute and the Faculty) totalled 178, with about 120 ladies; there were also present a number of members of the Institute and Faculty from other countries.

Scheveningen, within easy reach of the Hague, and with a sea-front containing several large hotels—at which many of the members of the Congress stayed—proved to be an ideal venue for an International Actuarial Congress. Two adjacent hotels, the Palace and the Kurhaus, provided most of the halls and assembly-rooms required for the business meetings. An official bureau for the Congress was installed in the entrance lounge of the Palace Hotel. The Congress was favoured by the weather, it being fine and sunny during most of the six days with an occasional cool breeze.

The Organizing Committee for the Congress, under the joint Presidency of Prof. Dr J. Engelfriet (President of the Actuarieel Genootschap) and Jhr G. M. M. Alting von Geusau (Chairman of the Nederlandse Vereniging ter Bevordering van het Levensverzekeringwezen), had arranged a full programme both of business meetings and of social functions. The three principal subjects chosen for discussion at the business meetings were described in the programme as follows:

(1) *Analysis of financial results*

It is proposed to discuss methods of approximate analysis of all sources of profit for a given period, independent of any valuation of the actuarial liabilities as at the end of such period. The purposes to which these methods may be applied are:

- (a) to forecast results of the forthcoming valuation,
- (b) to check approximately the results of a valuation as at the end of the given period,
- (c) to estimate the financial results for a given period, when no valuation has been made as at the end of such period.

The methods in question should meet the requirements stated within reasonable limits of accuracy, but without involving great labour. A comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of such methods, and of a more refined analysis generally will be interesting. The methods may refer to any form of life insurance, annuity or pension scheme, or to social insurance.

(2) *Methods of financing social insurance*

The various methods of financing social insurance (old age, disability, widows' and orphans' pensions) differ in so far as they lead, to a greater or less extent, or not at all, to the accumulation of funds. It is proposed to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various systems. Attention should be paid both to the actuarial aspects of the problem, and, in particular, to the economic aspects. The expression 'social insurance' should be understood in this connexion as including not only compulsory insurance as introduced by governments, but also those schemes originating from voluntary co-operation between certain groups.

(3) *Application of mathematical statistics in insurance*

It is proposed to develop the application to actuarial science of modern methods in mathematical statistics. New applications, or the results of methods already known, may be dealt with, as well as new methods. It would be interesting to have a synopsis of the possibilities of applying mathematical statistics to insurance, particularly the theory of sampling.

Nearly fifty papers had been written for submission to the Congress, and advance copies were supplied to the members; no less than twenty-one of the papers were on subject (2) and thirteen on subject (1). Two papers on each of subjects (1) and (2) were from Fellows of the Institute as follows:

Notes on forecasting surplus, by E. J. W. DYSON.

The analysis and forecast of surplus in a life office, by W. E. H. HICKOX and A. S. CLARKE.

Some notes on the economic effects of funding private and State pension schemes, by R. W. ABBOTT and F. W. BACON.

The development of social insurance in Great Britain, by W. S. HOCKING.

The official languages of the Congress were English, French and German, and an innovation at this Congress was the arrangement whereby at the discussion meetings each of the three principal subjects was discussed separately in each of the three languages. There were three sessions (held in the mornings of 8, 9 and 11 June), during each of which meetings were held in three different halls on different subjects and in different languages. It was the general opinion that this method was an improvement on that followed at previous Congresses under which each speech after being delivered in one language was translated by interpreters into the other official languages of the Congress. Members were free to attend which meetings they chose. Most members preferred to attend those in the language with which they were most familiar, but it was possible instead—if a member wished to do so—to attend all three meetings on one subject in the three different languages. Most of the meetings gave rise to well-sustained discussions; in order to confine the meetings in English to the 2½ hours allotted to each, it was necessary to set speakers an allowance of time which they were required not to exceed.

A number of members of the Congress were appointed 'reporters' for each subject, their duty being to prepare summaries of the discussions. Each of the discussion meetings was presided over by a senior visiting actuary, and the discussion was introduced by a Dutch reporter whose remarks dealt mainly with the papers on the subject submitted to the Congress before the meeting. At the end of the meeting another reporter summarized the discussion that had taken place at that meeting. Subsequently the reporters prepared general reports on each of the three subjects in the light of the discussions that had taken place in all three languages, and these reports were delivered at the Final Meeting of the Congress. Two Fellows of the Institute, Messrs W. H. Chapman and M. B. Knowles, acted as reporters and were allotted the tasks of summarizing the discussions at the meetings in English on subjects (1) and (2) respectively.

Another innovation at this Congress was the holding of informal meetings of groups of actuaries interested in certain selected subjects. These subjects had been suggested by various actuaries, and most of the meetings were conducted by the actuaries who had initiated the respective subjects. The informal

meetings took place mainly on the last two days of the Congress, several being held simultaneously on each of these days. Those who attended them were of the opinion that they served a very useful purpose. The subjects discussed at the informal meetings included:

De quelques considérations sur les surfaces de probabilité et la mise en lumière d'un type nouveau,

Les formules valables pour la vie entière représentant une loi de mortalité,

International statistics in insurance and insurance protection,

Notices bibliographiques internationales,

L'équilibre mathématique des caisses de crédit différées,

Excess of loss re-insurance underwriting and rating problems,

Impôts et assurances sur la vie,

Industrial insurance with adjustable assured sums.

A third new feature introduced at the Thirteenth Congress was the production of two factual memoirs, each compiled from information supplied by actuaries of different countries. The titles of these symposia were *Taxes and life insurance* and *Legal regulations of private pension funds*, and they will be of value in making more widely known to actuaries the conditions with regard to these matters (often somewhat complex) ruling in other parts of the world than their own. Members of the Congress were presented, on arriving at Scheveningen, with a copy of Volume III of the *Transactions* of the Congress, containing these memoirs together with various other papers on subjects outside the main programme. Volumes I and II, containing most of the papers and reports of the meetings, will be issued later.

The Opening Meeting of the Congress was held in the afternoon of 7 June in the Concert Hall of the Kurhaus. After an inaugural speech by M. A. P. T. J. Théate (President of the Permanent Committee) an address was delivered by Dr Engelfriet in which he referred to the satisfaction and pleasure that was felt at the renewal of international contacts by the holding of the first post-war Congress of Actuaries under the auspices of the Permanent Committee. He paid tribute to the memory of Amédée Bégault, the 'great promoter' of International Congresses and President of the Permanent Committee from 1909 to 1946, who died in 1949. He also made reference to those actuaries whose advanced age had prevented them from attending the Congress and mentioned in particular the recent attainment by Dr G. J. Lidstone of his eightieth birthday.

There then followed a discourse by His Excellency Prof. Dr P. Lieftinck, the Netherlands Minister of Finance. Dr Lieftinck dealt mainly with the economic aspects of State and private pension schemes, taking for his text the motto inscribed on the monument that was erected to commemorate the completion of the dyke enclosing the Zuider Zee on its north side, of which the English translation is 'A nation that lives helps to build its own future'.

Other speakers at the Opening Meeting included Ir L. J. M. Feber (Acting Burgomaster of the Hague), Mr F. A. A. Menzler, C.B.E. (President of the Institute of Actuaries), Mr I. Hesselberg (President of the Norwegian Actuarial Society), Prof. Dr E. Marchand (President of the Swiss Actuarial Society) and Jhr Alting von Geusau. Mr Menzler, in his speech, said how important

it was in this rapidly changing world that 'actuaries in all countries, trained in different ways, and practising under widely different national conditions, should get together at not infrequent intervals in order to exchange their problems and experience'. He assured the Congress that actuaries in Great Britain took, and would continue to take, the closest interest in the work of the Permanent Committee, the link between successive Congresses. Jhr Alting von Geusau gave a general review of the arrangements for the Thirteenth Congress.

The Final Meeting of the Congress was held in the afternoon of 12 June in the Royal Theatre at the Hague. Besides the reading of the reports of the discussions mentioned above, speeches were made by His Excellency Dr H. Mulderije (the Netherlands Minister of Justice), Prof. Dr C. Campagne (President of the Scientific Organizing Committee of the Congress), Mr V. Howell (President of the Society of Actuaries), Mr B. Drachmann (President of the Danish Actuarial Society), Dr R. Ottaviani (Member of the Council of the Italian Actuarial Society), Sr J. Ruiz y Ruiz (Delegate of the Spanish Government), and the closing speech was by M. Théate. In the course of this meeting alterations in the regulations of the Permanent Committee were adopted concerning the dates of Council Meetings and the fixing of the annual subscriptions. It was also made known that it is planned to hold the next Congress in Madrid in 1954.

The Banquet, which was held in the evening of 12 June in the Kurhaus, was provided by the kindness of the Nederlandse Vereniging ter Bevordering van het Levensverzekeringwezen (Association of Dutch Life Offices), and speeches during the Banquet were made by Dr M. Niemeyer and Jhr Alting von Geusau, President and Chairman respectively of that body. Other speakers included M. H. Auterbe (President of the French Actuarial Society), M. H. Vermeulen (Vice-President of the Belgian Actuarial Society), Mr J. M. Ross, F.R.S.E. (President of the Faculty of Actuaries), Dr K.-G. Hagstroem (Vice-President of the Swedish Actuarial Society), and M. Théate.

The keynote of the speeches made by visiting actuaries at the Final Meeting and the Banquet was of congratulation to the Dutch Organizing Committee on the success of the Congress. It was clear to all that on both the business and social sides the preparations for the Congress had been made with much thought and care. Every event in the programme was carried through smoothly and efficiently, and this was no small feat for such a large assemblage. Moreover, the programme itself, with its happy alternation of business and social events and with its considerate provision for the entertainment of the ladies during the periods when the discussion meetings were in progress, was such as to meet with universal commendation. We give below a summary of the more important social functions that were arranged for members of the Congress. The pages of the *Journal* are not, however, the place for the full description that would be necessary to do justice to them.

In the evening of 7 June, the first day of the Congress, there was a party in the reception rooms of the Palace Hotel—arranged by the Actuarieel Genootschap—which was honoured by the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

In the afternoon of 8 June members were taken, by the hospitality of the Hague Life Insurance Companies, in motor-coaches for a tour round the Hague and its environs, enabling them to see many of the principal buildings of the city, and giving them also views of the post-war building developments,

the fishing harbour of Scheveningen, and the residential suburb of Wassenaar. In the evening there was a Reception by Her Majesty's Government in the ancient Ridderzaal in the Hague, where amid magnificent surroundings members were received by Dr Lieftinck, the Minister of Finance.

In the afternoon of 9 June two special trains conveyed members from Scheveningen to Amsterdam Central Station, whence they were taken in motor-boats for a long trip round the historic canals of Amsterdam. The expedition ended in a visit to the famous Rijksmuseum, where members were able to see the well-known pictures by Rembrandt and other painters, and where refreshments were provided. This function was arranged by the Amsterdam Insurance Institutions.

In the afternoon of 11 June members were given the choice between various excursions by motor-coach to places of beauty and interest. In the evening there was a Reception by the Municipality of the Hague, the members being received by the Burgomaster. The Reception took place in the Municipal Museum where the galleries—containing a wonderful collection of paintings by old masters and modern artists, besides collections of ceramics, musical instruments, etc.—were thrown open to the Congress.

The Congress ended with the Banquet on the evening of 12 June to which reference has already been made and which was followed by a display of fireworks on the sea-front.

The purpose of the International Congresses is to provide contact between the actuaries of different countries, socially as well as scientifically. In this the Thirteenth Congress achieved complete success. It must have called for considerable courage to undertake the organization of the first post-war Congress. At the Opening Meeting Dr Engelfriet said that in his opinion the Organizing Committee had found the happy medium between the horn of plenty of pre-war Congresses and the 'empty bottles' which at one time the Committee had feared was all they would have to offer. To British actuaries the Dutch conception of 'medium' was much higher than anything they had expected. The entertainments were on a scale such that they will be unforgettable to those who participated in them. Many of those who visited Holland for the Congress received also private hospitality from our Dutch hosts. The President of the Institute has written, on behalf of members of the Institute who attended the Congress, letters of thanks and appreciation to Dr Engelfriet and Jhr Alting von Geusau, the Presidents of the Organizing Committee. British actuaries have brought back with them not only very happy recollections of the Thirteenth International Congress, but also a deepened affection for Holland and the successors of Johan de Witt.