

International Outlook

SWEDISH FARMERS, LIKE those in many other countries, care very little about what happens outside their own country. They have been "peninsular," which in this connection means much the same as "insular." This is not surprising, since no other group within a community has its roots so deeply imbedded in the land.

On the other hand, agriculture is influenced in many ways by the world market. Hitherto farmers have left it to the commercial interests to deal with foreign countries. I never was sure that this was right, for even farmers have a good deal to learn from other countries. Other groups have learned through international co-operation, why not the farmers as well?

The first world war brought a lot of evil, but in some respects there was a development in a positive direction. For example, the international co-operation of industrial laborers got its definite structure after that disastrous struggle. It should not be denied by anyone, even if he does not belong to the group in question, that the organization of the workers, national and international, and the raising of their living standards, is one of the most important features within the history of mankind.

During the period of the treaty of Versailles, however, politicians and economists forgot the biggest and broadest of all groups, the farming population. Neither the politicians or economists, nor the farmers themselves, thought that to be a problem worth consideration.

However, it very soon became so. During the agricultural crisis in the early 'thirties there was a frightening impoverishment of the farming class. It cannot be expected that the second world war, devastating the world to a much greater extent than the first, will bring many gifts to humanity — though there will probably be some. Will one of them be that farmers all over the globe will parallel their efforts, in the service of a starving mankind, and to their own advantage? There are a lot of signs — the names Hot Springs, F.A.O., I.F.A.P. — point that way.

Farmers United

A most striking feature in postwar times is the fact that farmers in quite a lot of countries have organized themselves in rather firm unions or federations.

No one can discover anything very definite yet, but a closer contact between farmers of the world is surely on the way. It is no easy task. Differences in living standards, income, and technical development are enormous. I remember, for example, a saying by Gandhi's friend, the Indian Peasant Leader, Professor Ranga.

“With malnutrition and even starvation dominant

in my country and a lot of others, it ought to be forbidden to feed grains and other foods to animals. That means a waste of food, which should not be allowed.”

When we discussed the technical stage of agriculture in India compared with my country, he mentioned that their draught animals were not very good. I thought that tractors were now coming into the discussion, but instead it was the question of improving the breed from which they got their oxen, in order to get a better working capacity.

Is it not a curious fact that in Sweden agriculture is midway between the horse and the tractor; America and Great Britain have definitely entered the tractor age; but in India, farming is standing on the threshold between a poor and a better variety of draught oxen! (Of course I do not know much about rice-growing; oxen may be particularly apt for that work, but there must be a tremendous difference in the stage of development.)

In spite of these differences, there seems to be such a strong undercurrent uniting farmers all over the world, that it could not be stopped. This does not mean that the ordinary farmer has very many feelings of that kind. But the leaders of farmers' organizations realize that unity is essential, and they are able to influence the broad groups of members.

The pioneers in this respect were the “Confédération Internationale de l'Agriculture,” started long ago, with their seat in Paris. This body worked on a scientific and informational basis, with big confer-

ences at certain intervals in order to survey the technical stage.

There was also the International Agricultural Institute in Rome, for keeping statistics and collecting figures concerning agriculture.

However, these bodies were not built up for doing any actual organization work, or for influencing governments or states — except through information supplied.

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (I.F.A.P.) are the organizational pioneers. The body that has taken the initiative toward uniting the farmers of the world is the National Farmers' Union in England, with its president, Sir James Turner. During recent years the idea has been strongly supported by farm organizations in many lands, particularly the United States and Canada.

Conclusion

Once upon a time Syd Carter of Stratford-on-Avon gave his opinion about a certain man: "He is not a farmer, he is a wheat-grower." Farmers throughout the world will understand such a saying, but certainly not all urban people.

To us of the land, farming means much more than a way of making a living.

Two things are sacred, soil and life. This does not mean that we are not allowed to touch them. We break the soil, we drain it, treat it with various tools and implements. A real farmer is always trying to improve his land. We take lives every day — that is

part of our production, but those are the individuals. The breeds, the races survive, and it behooves us to improve them as much as possible.

Everything cannot be counted in dollars and cents.

To maintain farming as a living industry, to maintain a prosperous and happy farming population, is worth many hardships and troubles.

Farming throughout the world is in the melting pot.