

developments in Trade Unionism generally. Although it is only in recent years that Congress has been a complete index to the tendencies in the movement as a whole yet it is true to say that from the time of its foundation in 1868, Congress has reflected the major changes in Trade Union policy on general social questions. In addition, the developments in the structure and functions of Congress itself must be regarded as highly important, in view of the influential position it now occupies in the world of organised Labour.

1869—1873.

The first big step taken to establish Congress as the annual Parliament of Labour, with a continuity of policy and tradition, was in 1869, only a year after the first Conference was held. It was then decided to appoint a Parliamentary Committee to carry out the decisions of Congress, and it will be clear that until this step was taken it was impossible to regard the annual meeting as being much more than but a great demonstration; useful, indeed, but not a permanent organisation for carrying out the wishes of the Trade Union armies.

It was not until 1872 that the practice started of submitting an annual report of the Parliamentary Committee, but from that date the custom was followed regularly, to the great benefit of orderly and business-like administration of Congress affairs. A year later, at the 1873 Congress, Standing Orders were for the first time adopted and at the same time it was decided to print the proceedings of Congress.

These initial measures of organisation may be regarded together as the first decisive step taken to make Congress that authoritative permanent body, with a tradition and a continuous policy, that it is now recognised to be. It may seem to have taken a long time to work out all the steps in this development, but we must recognise the wisdom and good sense of those pioneers who saw clearly the future importance of the new body they were setting up.

From this time until the 80's, the Trade Union world was hampered by sectional quarrels and there was little progress