

International Relationships



THE history of the British Trade Union Movement shows that many of its leaders have always been conscious of the need of uniting the workers internationally as well as organising them nationally. Before the Trades Union Congress itself was formed, prominent men, such as Mr. Applegarth and others, were participating in the International Association of Working Men, which was established in London in 1864. This organisation had for its fundamental aim the union of working men in all countries for the emancipation of labour, and declared that "the subjection of the men of labour to the men of capital lies at the bottom of all servitude, all social misery and all political dependence." The influence of the Trade Union leaders in that association was shown on the occasion of important struggles in which the workers were engaged. When in 1871, the workers in the engineering shops in the North were engaged in a long drawn-out struggle for a nine hours' day, it was through the agency of the International Working Men's Association that the immigration of strike breakers was stopped.

Fifty years ago, in 1878, Mr. George Shipton and some of his colleagues went to Paris to confer with French workmen on industrial questions. The French law was then unfavourable to any form of international association and the meeting was broken up, the French representatives being thrown into prison. In 1883, an international conference was held in Paris, consisting of British, Spanish, Italian, and French delegates. The Nottingham Trades Union Congress sent delegates to that conference, among them being Mr. H. Broadhurst. In August, 1886, French Trade Unionists organised an international conference on the occasion of an Exhibition that was being held in Paris. At that conference there were seven British delegates, among them being Mr. J. Mawdsley, the then Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee. In 1888, the Parliamentary