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**REPORTS ON DEVELOPMENTS OF
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XVITH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ACTUARIES

WHEN the XVIth International Congress opened in Brussels on June 15th, our Belgian hosts estimated our numbers as 1,100 actuaries with 750 wives. This unquestionably made it the largest assembly of actuaries ever to gather under one roof, and quite a sturdy growth from the gathering of 226 actuaries that formed the first Congress in the same city in 1895. The delegation of actuaries from the United States and Canada made up just over 110 of this total. The president of the Congress was Mr. Edouard Franckx of Belgium; our own president, Jim Hoskins, was the vice-president of the Congress from the United States, and Gordon Beatty the vice-president from Canada.

The Belgian Organizing Committee had done a prodigious job of preparing for our coming. We found ourselves housed in a dozen or more Brussels hotels. Although papers to a total of 83 had been presented, on the three major topics and three minor topics, bound copies of the originals with summaries in the five languages of the Congress awaited our arrival, and the printing job was excellent.

Of course, Brussels is a city expert at handling conventions. The Palais des Congr s, with its main hall accommodating 1,500 people, equipped with a public address and simultaneous translation system and a machine for projecting the spelling of a speaker's name, had been specially designed with meetings such as ours in view. The greatest of care had been taken, as well, in organizing the meetings. Two co-chairmen presided, a reviewer summarized for perhaps 20 minutes the papers presented, and during the ensuing discussion a second reviewer prepared a summary to conclude the session, while a secretary was in charge of the permanent record. Nevertheless, members will appreciate the problems of discussion in such a mammoth and multilingual meeting. It is a tribute to the independence and vigor of the profession that the discussion became quite intimate and animated on occasion.

The subject "Additional Benefits in Life Policies" had brought forth an almost bewildering variety of practical experiments in this direction in different countries. They included, however, a review of Canadian Disability and Double Indemnity experience by Jim Campbell, a study of

the handling of Combined Coverage Group policies by Ed Green, a report on an experimental study in analyzing the life insurance premium and reserve into components corresponding to causes of death by C. J. Nesbitt and D. R. Schuette, and a report by Bert Winter on Claim Cost Experience of Dependents on Family Policies.

The papers on the financing of Social Insurance and of Pension Funds, to which Bob Myers had contributed a study on the Actuarial Analysis of Pension Plans under Inflationary Conditions, led to quite a violent discussion touched off by recent changes in Social Security in Sweden. These had increased Social Security benefits to the point where one group of Swedish actuaries believed voluntary insurance was being destroyed. Another group just as emphatically did not. The dispute was complicated by a secondary one over funding or pay-as-you-go financing, which brought a number of non-Swedish actuaries into the melee. It required all of Albert Linton's suavity as co-chairman to keep this discussion parliamentary.

The Stop Loss and Excess of Loss Reinsurance papers included one by Mr. Pressman giving a clear historical survey of the subject, and a number of European papers dealing with theoretical and practical problems. It is clear that the methods have not become very widespread—usually as a supplement to proportional reinsurance in general insurance. Their use is at present even more limited in Life Insurance.

The antagonism between theoretic and pragmatic systems of ratemaking erupted in the discussion on Motor Accident Insurance, where Gordon Beatty, as co-chairman, was required to keep the peace. The debate raged between some American and Canadian ratemakers who might be, perhaps unfairly, accused of picking their rates out of a hat, and European ratemakers who, to their opponents, seemed to feel safer with complicated mathematical curves, in the absence of relevant statistics. The argument continued in the meeting of ASTIN which was held a day or two later.

The other two subjects, "Statistical Theory of Sampling," and "Recent Evolution of Mortality" to which Lou Levinson, Ed Lew, John Phelps and Jack Bell contributed, did not provoke similar violent controversy. Ed Lew had a comparatively easy job as co-chairman of this last. These papers, however, occupying some 387 pages of Vol. II, would constitute, I should think, the most complete survey of recent mortality and changes in mortality likely to be available for some time.

Val Howell, ably seconded by Bert Winter, kept track of the difficult discussion on Additional Benefits in Life Policies as secretary, and Ted Morrison served in the same capacity for the discussion on Statistical Theory of Sampling.

However, as you are well aware, an actuarial meeting is by no means all formal discussion. The hospitality of our Belgian friends proved boundless. From the moment when our ladies and ourselves were welcomed in a formal opening graced by Prince Baudouin, the entertainment was royal. During the four days of the business sessions we were warned not to "follow our wives about." The 750 of them were transported to Antwerp, Fashion Shows and Receptions. But in between working sessions the entire 1,850 of us were taken in long motorcades to near or distant places in the well-tended Belgian countryside, Brussels itself, Louvain, Waterloo, Liège, Ghent, Bruges, Ostend. No one will ever forget turning on some of the cloverleaves and seeing the 48 buses that formed the convoy (at times) coming along the highway behind. The English-speaking buses were usually at the front, perhaps because the Belgians expected us to be more punctual. Shepherding the buses along were about a dozen little wiry Belgian motorcycle policemen. To guide us and explain the sights to us in excellent English we had the famous Brussels hostesses—a legacy of the World's Fair—dressed in red coats and blue Flemish caps.

The climax of the Congress was the final Banquet and Gala Ball, where in the midst of a sumptuous repast we had an opportunity to thank our hosts. The thanks of the English-speaking actuaries was conveyed most effectively by Frank Redington of the British Institute and our own president, Jim Hoskins, who spoke of the appreciation of North American actuaries of the part played by our Belgian hosts from the time when they first inspired the formation of the Congresses in 1895. The enormous task of handling a banquet of 2,000 people speaking a number of different languages will become apparent to you when I tell you that, while we sat down at nine, our after-dinner speaker, the Minister for the Middle Classes in the Belgian Cabinet, rose to address us at about 11:30. I was sitting near him and, as you can imagine, as the anchor man he was highly excited from 10:30 on. But he made a very effective short concluding speech. We then adjourned to the Palace of Beaux Arts for the Ball about midnight, and our more agile members danced till dawn.

During the Congress the Council of the Permanent Committee met, and certain important decisions took place and troublesome problems were debated. After a review of the current financing, it was decided that an increase in the annual fee (now 100 Belgian francs) was necessary and that the increase should be of 50% to 150 Belgian francs. I urge you to continue your support of the Permanent Committee, in spite of the increase in fee: 150 Belgian francs is still a very small contribution to maintain what I believe is the oldest truly world-wide professional gathering in the free world. There are many areas where it constitutes the only

effective center for actuarial organization. Second, because of the desire to co-operate with the international meetings of the International Social Security organizations and their actuaries, it was decided to think in terms of Congresses every four years instead of three. Two other matters were the subject of earnest debate. Along with the English actuaries, your American and Canadian representatives expressed the view that the Council should let possible host countries know that invitations would be welcome which set a limit on the number of guest actuaries that could be entertained. The limitation would necessarily have to be given effect by, in our case, the delegations from the United States and Canada being limited (by ourselves) to our quota of the total. It appears to your representatives that, unless this is done, it will become too difficult to induce possible host countries to issue invitations. Most of the European representatives on the Council still recoil at the difficulty of settling the membership of their own delegations, if limited in number. Perhaps I should explain that the Council is still awaiting an invitation for the XVIIth Congress, and that few European centers could handle nearly 2,000 delegates and wives as Brussels did. The second subject of debate arose over how the programs of Congresses are determined. Up until now, this has been the responsibility of the local Organizing Committee. The English actuaries have been pressing for a more continuous study of the subjects for discussion by a committee of the Council, which someone unfortunately dubbed a brain trust. The compromise arrived at here was that the local Associations should suggest subjects to the Council, who would collaborate in future with any local Organizing Committee. In specifics this means that, if you are a member of the Permanent Committee in the States, you may, in future, let Mr. Klem or Mr. Howell know (or in Canada Mr. Morrison or myself) what subjects you think should be considered at future Congresses, and these will be passed on to the Council for consideration. Since the next Congress is four years away, perhaps you should hold your fire for the next year or so.

Finally, if you are not a member of the Permanent Committee, let me urge you to support the International Congresses in this tangible way. Quite a high percentage of our Society membership joined the Permanent Committee at the time of the New York Congress, but this has fallen somewhat since. In the United States about 25% of our members are now members of the Permanent Committee. If you are not now a member, please help the Congress by giving it your personal support when you next receive this request from your American and Canadian representatives.

B. T. HOLMES