

Note from Ronald W. G. Mackay on a meeting of the British delegation to The Hague held in the House of Commons (2 June 1948)

Caption: On 2 June 1948, Ronald W. G. Mackay, British Conservative MP, convenes to the House of Commons the members of the British delegation to the Congress of Europe held in The Hague in May. His purpose is to examine the conditions for the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the Congress and the tasks of the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity.

Source: The Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science - Archives and Rare Books, London, 10 Portugal Street, WC2A 2HD. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/archive/Default.htm>, Ronald William Gordon Mackay papers. Chapter IX, file no 10: The Development of the idea of European Union in the different Parliaments of Europe Item i, France Item ii, Britain tem iii, Italy Item iv, Holland 1948, MACKAY/13/12.

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Minutes of a meeting of the British Delegation to the Congress of Europe, held in the House of Commons on Wednesday, 2nd June, 1948

Mr. R.W.G. MACKAY, M.P. presided, and about 70 Members of the Delegation attended

THE CHAIRMAN said that the meeting had been convened at the request of members so that they could know what effect would be given to the Resolutions passed at the Congress of Europe at The Hague. He called on Mr. Duncan Sandys to give a report on the recent meeting of the International Co-ordinating Committee.

1. Mr. DUNCAN SANDYS said that last week-end there had been a two day meeting of the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, in Paris. The first and most urgent of their obligations had been to bring the decisions of the Congress to the notice of all who might be interested and who might influence others. Copies of the Resolutions were being posted to all M.P.s in all free countries of Europe and to a few of the countries behind the iron curtain.

It had been decided to ask every National Delegation to appoint an influential and representative Deputation to call upon its Prime Minister or Minister for Foreign Affairs and present him formally with a copy of the Resolutions and to ask the Governments of every country to study them and as far as possible give them their support and later on to express their opinion on them.

The Congress had asked that various Committees should be set up, and the following steps, among others, had been taken by the International Committee: -

A) Monsieur Drapier, Chef de Cabinet to Monsieur Spaak has been invited to be Chairman of a Committee to draw up a Charter of Human Rights.

B) Senor de Madariaga has been invited to act as Chairman of Cultural Committee to carry out the terms of the Cultural Resolution and in particular to examine the possibilities and the method of creating a European Cultural Centre.

C) Sir Harold Butler has been invited to be Chairman of an International Committee to study further the various economic reports submitted to the Congress.

D) Monsieur Ramadier has been asked to be Chairman of a Committee to examine the possible composition and terms of reference of a European Assembly. Such an Assembly should be regarded as the central feature of the International campaign.

E) A Press Committee is being set up under the Chairmanship of Commander King-Hall, with a Press Officer in London and Paris.

It was decided that existing groups in each country should be asked to organise public meetings and popular demonstrations, synchronising with parliamentary debates and resolutions, all arranged to fit in with the overall plans of the International Committee, national groups should try as far as possible to reproduce in miniature the form of the various International Committees. Mr. SANDYS added that, in his opinion, France and Britain would have to take a leading part in the future work of the Organisation and it was hoped that the British Delegation would remain in being and form a body of opinion.

2. LORD LAYTON suggested that a report on the Congress should be produced, halfway in size between the verbatim report and the 16 page booklet now being circulated, it was agreed that there should be a ready sale for a 100 page booklet and it would be of great help to speakers on the subject of United Europe.

3. MR. LINDSAY wished to know how the members of the various committees would be chosen and whether people who had taken part in the discussions at The Hague would have a chance to clear up the small points which had been glossed over at the time. He was not satisfied that the chosen committees would be truly representative of all the forces within each country, some of which were not present at The Hague.

The CHAIRMAN gave an assurance that there was no question of the choice of members being left entirely to the Chairman of the International Co-ordinating Committee. All groups must be represented on the committees and in addition the committees would have the power to co-opt additional members as required.

4. MR. SANDYS stated that the International Committee intended to meet once a month in Paris, but later it was hoped that every alternative meeting would be held in some other Capital and that some form of public demonstration would be organised to coincide with it. Owing to difficulties of travel it was important to establish national study groups who could pass on the results of their deliberations to the meetings of the International Committee. It might be possible to appoint a rapporteur to attend the national group meetings. It was agreed that Committees should be set up to consider other matters such as the future of Germany and the Spanish question, but the composition of the committees had been shelved until a further meeting.

5. MR. MANNINGHAM BULLER drew attention to the fact that in paragraph 6 on page 6 of the RESOLUTIONS the words "united and" had been omitted before the words "federated Europe". It was agreed that this was a clerical error.

6. MR. BEECH said the object of the Movement was to gain support from the ordinary men and women in every country and speakers and literature must be available to awaken their interest. The Movement must get mass support throughout Europe.

7. THE CHAIRMAN proposed that a British Co-ordination Committee composed of the five Movements which organised the British Delegation to the Congress of Europe should be constituted and asked to set up, in Great Britain, Committees similar to those set up by the International Committee, and that all members of the Delegation should be asked if they would like to serve on any of the Committees. By this means it would be possible to choose people to serve on the International Committees and it would keep the British Delegates in touch with the work that is being done. The Resolution was agreed.

8. THE CHAIRMAN stated, in answer to a question by MR. HIRST that a correct copy of the Resolutions would be handed out to the Press to refute the spurious statements that various papers have attributed to the Congress.

9. MISS SIBTHORP asked whether an opportunity would be given to other Associations to affiliate themselves. It was agreed that this question should be left to the Co-ordinating Committee.

10. MR. MACKAY stated that it had been decided by the International Committee that each country should present the Resolutions to their Government, and he asked the British Delegation to appoint a representative deputation to take the Resolutions to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister with a request that they consider it and give their reactions. It was agreed that the choice of a Deputation should be left to the Executive Committee.

11. MR. EDWARDS proposed that the British Delegation should continue to meet at half yearly intervals as although the majority of the Delegation belonged to one or other of the Organising Associations, some 50 of them did not, though they accepted the idea of European Unity. It would be a great pity to lose their support. A half-yearly meeting could act as an assembly to question the Co-ordinating Committee and find out what progress had been made by the various committees. It was agreed that a further meeting would be held in the

Autumn at which it would be decided whether future meetings would be necessary or desirable.

12. MR. DUNCAN SANDYS, in answer to several questions on the future of the British Delegation's existence, said it would be a pity to make the Delegation a closed shop. Various sub-committees should be set up and should have to report regularly to a wider council or assembly which would be based upon those who came to The Hague but could include others.

13. MR. MANNINGHAM BULLER suggested that friction could be avoided at future Congresses if a code of procedure were agreed beforehand by the International Committee, as there were big differences between the French and the British rules of procedure. It was essential to have a bi-lingual Chairman. The suggestion was noted.

14. MR. MACADAM said that all members of the British Delegation had been impressed by the hospitality of the Dutch. A welcome gesture would be to present someone at The Hague with a piece of British plate as a token of appreciation. The British Delegation might also like to send a letter of appreciation, in addition to the one which has already been sent by the International Committee. It was agreed that the Executive would circulate members of the British Delegation regarding contributions towards the plate, and that the Chairman should send a letter of appreciation to The Hague.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Members of the international Committee and the staff who had worked so hard at The Hague.

R.W.G. MACKAY
Chairman.