

Governments, there seems little doubt that the Congress was fairly representative of the main streams of thought in most of the important countries of the world.

This very fact, indeed, was responsible for what at first appeared to the writer to be a weakness in the Congress. When some delegates were enthusiastic about large families and others little concerned with mere family size, when some were interested in the problems and techniques of family planning and others condemned it as immoral, when some represented still quite patriarchal countries and others countries in which women were fully recognized as the equals of men, it was difficult to get down to any detailed discussion or expert examination. In truth, it could not be claimed that this Congress achieved anything very important in the way of settling the problems of family life. It did, however, provide an opportunity for the exchange of information and widely differing views on housing and home-making; sex education, marriage guidance and general education for family life; the role of women in general (and mothers in particular) in society; family allowances and other social measures for the strengthening of family life; the role of family organisations in national life, and so on.

Out of this exchange there emerged, despite all differences of opinion, a widespread and deep desire for international co-operation. Most delegates felt that they could learn much, and perhaps most of all from those from whom they differed most widely. Towards the end of the Congress, this diffuse desire for international co-operation gradually crystallized into a determination to set up an international organisation and, at the final session, a resolution to this effect was passed unanimously.

The new organisation is to be called the International Union of Family Organisations; but it was clearly recognized that all decisions as to structure and

programme could at present be purely provisional. The British delegates, in common with those from most other countries, felt that they had no mandate whatsoever to commit their countries or even the organisations they represented to anything very concrete. Equally, however, they felt that it would be a great pity to allow this very representative gathering to disperse without forming at least an embryonic organisation. A provisional international committee was therefore set up, a Swiss delegate was appointed as provisional president, and a French delegate as provisional secretary. It was agreed that vice-presidents should, if possible, eventually be appointed from the United States, Great Britain, France, 'Eastern Europe' (by which the U.S.S.R. was generally understood to be meant), Scandinavia, South America, the Near East and the Far East; and, no doubt, it was by an oversight (for these provisional arrangements were necessarily made hurriedly) that Africa and Australasia were not included in this list. Finally, it was agreed that the International Union should be open to all countries, including those not represented at the Congress, and that every effort should be made to work closely with U.N.O. and U.N.E.S.C.O. It is encouraging to be able to report that an observer from U.N.O. welcomed the establishment of the International Union.

Whether the future will see a great strengthening of the new International Union of Family Organisations, or whether it will see its gradual withering, it is as yet impossible to say. Everything depends upon whether the action of the delegates is ratified when they report back to their respective national organisations. One most encouraging fact, however, is that throughout the world to-day there is great interest in the problems of family life. Catholics and Protestants, Capitalists and Communists, all, in their different ways, recognize the importance of the family, and in this lies great hope.

CYRIL BIBBY

## NEWS and VIEWS

### East African Agricultural and Forestry Research: Dr. B. A. Keen, F.R.S.

DR. B. A. KEEN has been appointed director of the new East African Agricultural and Forestry Research Organisation. The Organisation will work in close association with the corresponding Veterinary Organisation and the Agricultural Departments of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. For many years Dr. Keen was assistant director and head of the Physics Department at Rothamsted Experimental Station. During 1929-31, at the request of the Government of India, he was seconded as director of the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute to reorganise it. During 1943-45, he was scientific adviser to the Middle East Supply Centre. In 1946 he revisited Palestine to advise on the organisation needed for rural development and also went to West Africa as chairman of the United Kingdom Government Mission to inquire into the production of vegetable oils and oil seeds. Since February 1947 he has been touring East Africa at the invitation of the Governors' Conference to examine agricultural problems and research needs.

### Recordings at Kew of the Brest Explosion

MR. J. M. STAGG, of the Kew Observatory, Richmond, Surrey, writes that the effects of the explosion

of a cargo of nitrate in Brest harbour on the evening of July 28 were clearly recorded on one of the seismographs and on four barographs at the Observatory, which is 480 km. from Brest. The seismograph, a short-period, vertical component instrument, recorded the first effect at 16h. 48m. 52s. G.M.T. with a second pulse nine seconds later. The biggest amplitude occurred at 16h. 49m. 05s. and the whole disturbance lasted about one minute. The character of the effect on the seismograph closely resembled the effects produced by bomb explosions, flying bombs, etc., in the neighbourhood of the Observatory during the War, when, for the most part, the disturbances were due to airborne sound waves. That the seismograph disturbance was due to the explosion air wave and not to true earth movements is supported by the times of the disturbance recorded by the Kew barographs, including a very sensitive microbarograph. All four instruments showed a sudden pulse (about one millibar) of very short duration in both directions, the mean of the times being 16h. 49m. 0s.  $\pm$  15s. The Kew records taken together put the time of the Brest explosion at about 16h. 25m. G.M.T.: there was no indication of an earth movement or an upper air sound wave.