

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1949)
Heft: 1

Artikel: Constitution of the international silk union
Autor: Chessex, Robert
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-799275>

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Constitution of the International Silk Union

Within a few weeks, Zurich will receive the delegates — numerous, we hope! — of some thirty countries all over the world and who are to found, on May 30th, the International Silk Union (Union internationale de la Soie). For more reasons than one, this important event deserves mention in *Textiles Suisses*. It was in Zurich, the centre of the Swiss silk industry and seat of an ancient and reputed Conditioning House¹ and of a Textile Training School², that, twenty years ago this year, the last pre-war congress of the International Silk Federation was held. In our last issue we mentioned the efforts exerted to reconstitute a co-operative organization promoting the sale of silk³ and we are happy to be able to devote a few lines now to this revival. We also wish to express here our sincere hopes for the successful issue of the preliminary work now carried on and for the prosperity of the new organization which will benefit, not only the silk trades, but the textile industry as a whole.

* * *

In June last, members of the International Silk Congress at Lyons and Paris voted that a technical conference should be held at Zurich in the spring of 1949 in order to study the possibility of unifying methods of testing and classifying silks on an international scale. At the same time, the temporary International Silk Bureau was entrusted with the work of elaborating the statutes of a future « Union ». In January, the draught of the statutes was examined and discussed in Paris, where two plenary sessions of the Bureau were held. As a great number of specialists and technicians will be assembled in Zurich on the occasion of this conference, it seemed useful to take advantage of the opportunity offered and hold a constitutive assembly of the new organization at the same time, especially in view of the fact that the preliminary work seemed sufficiently advanced to warrant such a decisive step. It is therefore with the firm intention of establishing a lasting structure that the delegates of most of the countries concerned one way or another in the production, trade and commerce of silk, will meet at the Zurich Congress Hall on May 30th next.

After the official opening — which will be a simple ceremony, seeing that the principal object of the assembly is work and study — the first day is to be devoted to the constitution of the International Union, that is to say, to the final details of the statutes and their adoption, to the choice of headquarters, appointment of members of the office, presidents and correspondents for the fifteen different departments, and so on. We may say, by the way, that each of these fifteen departments corresponds to a well-defined section of the silk trades as a whole. The statutes will stipulate that a general assembly must be held every two years; this will, in theory, make it possible to transfer the headquarters of the Union and re-elect the Committee as often.

The second day of the Zurich Congress will be devoted to the work to be entrusted to the committees. We cannot here give any detailed idea of all the questions which will be put before them and can only mention the most outstanding: for instance, a special committee will be appointed « for the defence of silk », that is to say, of the term *silk*; its task will be to obtain protection of the term and to prevent its use for any other product not derived from the cocoon. Protection is already granted in France and Italy along these lines. Another committee will be nominated for « propaganda » in view of promoting the sale of silk on all markets and for all purposes. It goes without saying, however, that all advertising will be entirely constructive and not in any way disparaging to rival fibres. Dyeing and printing processes will be dealt with by a third committee, which will establish international standards for the testing and fastness of dyes and prints. This problem is of direct interest to the retail trades who must be able to offer consumers every guarantee of quality. Indeed, all propaganda would prove quite ineffective, and even deleterious, if the products promoted do not really correspond to what the public expects.

As is but right, and despite the solemnity of the congress, the programme also features a banquet and ball, to be held in one of Zurich's leading hotels.

It must be borne in mind, however, that if Zurich has been chosen as the « godmother » of the International Silk Union, it is because this city was first selected as the meeting-place for a technical conference, called together to discuss ways and means to unify testing and classifying of silk. This conference will therefore begin its work at the same date and will continue after the two days reserved for the constitutive assembly. The significance of this task may not be entirely apparent to the general public, but it is no less real for all that. As expressed in figures, the importance of silk as a factor of world economy has diminished considerably since 1914. Nevertheless, as a textile fibre, it has retained a prestige born of its ancient lineage and tradition, kept intact by its own inherent qualities. Anything that may help to preserve this reputation and enhance the standing of silk will, of course, also serve the interests of other textiles. For, despite all technical progress, silk will always remain the fibre and fabric *par excellence*, the choice of good taste, elegance and fashion, and this thanks to its properties of exclusiveness, novelty and tradition.

Robert Chessex

¹ See *Textiles Suisses* No. 4/1946, page 46.

² See *Textiles Suisses* No. 2/1948, page 91.

³ See *Textiles Suisses* No. 4/1948, page 57.



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Spinning and finishing of all types of combed and carded yarns and twists for knitting, weaving and carpet-making.