

The Internatioal Centre of Farming and Rural Culture (CICPR)
La Mulnais - 44170 - TREFFIEUX¹

and

The Research Laboratory for Law and Social Change (CNRS UMR 3128)
Department of Law and Political Sciences
University of Nantes (France)

Cordially invite you to participate in an International Colloquium on the following subject:

Social Insurance and Farmers around the World
In Nantes, France
Thursday, 1st to Saturday, 3rd July, 2010

This international meeting will be held

- With the scientific support of the **Maison des sciences de l'homme Ange Guépin de Nantes (Ange Guépin Human Sciences House in Nantes)** and the **Comité d'histoire de la Sécurité sociale** (Ministère des Affaires sociales) (Committee for the History of the National Health Programme, Ministry of Social Affairs),
- In connection with the **4th World Forum on Human Rights** to be held in the Cité des Congrès in Nantes from 28 June to 1 July, 2010,
- In collaboration with the associations network of the **Maison des citoyens du monde (Citizens of the World House)** in Nantes,
- And with the support of the **public community groups in the region**: the Council General of the Loire-Atlantique, the Region Pays-de-la-Loire, and Nantes-Métropole.

1 – Why this Project?

The forms of modern **social insurance** against what is usually termed **social risks** (illness, accident, maternity, childhood, invalidity, old age, unemployment) began to appear in the late 19th century in European countries, essentially in response to the new needs of salaried workers in industry. It took several decades for them to take on the forms we are familiar with today.

The year 2010 is truly an anniversary: it is time to celebrate the centennial of the Law of 5 April, 1910, that inaugurated the first “**workers’ and farmers’ retirement plans**” in France. This gave rise to debates – that are far from over around the world today – about the necessity or not of making benefits contributions drawn from workers’ salaries obligatory, on the choice between the systems of capitalization and distribution for pensions, on public or private management of such funds, and on whether to include the most numerous category of independent workers of the period, farmers and farm labourers...

In the rural world, **traditional forms of solidarity** within the family and neighbourhood, reciprocal help and individual savings linked to property, appeared to be sufficient for a

¹ The Centre international de Culture paysanne et rurale (CICPR) 1901 Law Association, created in the early 1990s, seeks to valorize the material and immaterial heritage born of the history of farming in the region, in a spirit of openness towards the world. Its headquarters is Treffieux, a community in the Châteaubriant (44) area. For more information, please see the website of its first colloquium in 2006: <http://palissy.humana.univ-nantes.fr/labos/cicpr/index.html>

longer time. Thus, it was several decades, sometimes even half a century later that **obligatory social insurance** for illness, accident or retirement pensions were set up for farmers and farm labourers.

The objective of our colloquium is to **shed light on the history of farmers' social insurance as well as on its topicality**. For the first point, knowledge of the conditions in which systems of social insurance were set up in developed countries can provide much information and many questions pertinent for farmers' organizations and public authorities in developing countries. Furthermore, concentrating on social insurance for rural populations in the world today can shed light not only on the disparities among different countries, but especially enables us to take advantage reciprocally of all our experience in seeking true social progress for farmers and farm workers.

Accordingly, our Colloquium - entitled **Social Insurance and Farmers around the World** - is intended to be an international meeting of **active stakeholders** (labour union or mutual insurance leaders, political or administrative managers, NGO representatives, etc.) and **researchers in the social sciences** (historians, legal experts, sociologists, geographers, economists...) who wish to pool their knowledge and thinking about the experiences of farmers' mutual insurance, on the contributions of both general and specific legislation, on financing systems, and so on, that will enable us to make pertinent comparisons between different countries and to take stock of the present-day debates in both the **northern and southern hemispheres**. The colloquium organizers hope thus to contribute to constructing a world more in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Article 22 of which states that "Every person, as a member of society, has the right to social insurance."²

2 – Structuring the Colloquium

Faced with the sheer size of the subject, its geographical extent and links with so many other closely interrelated themes (the issue of agricultural income or food security, to mention only two other examples), the steering committee of the Colloquium, which brings together researchers and stakeholders, proposes to structure the exchanges around a limited number of themes and will endeavour to insure a balanced representation among the participants, drawn from both groups, as well as between South and North.

First Theme: Specific aspects of risk in agriculture and for rural populations

The whole notion of "risk" is not self-evident, but it is usual to distinguish economic and social risks. Historically, at least in the case of French agriculture, it has been the economic risks (fire, plague, hail, and other natural calamities...) that have been perceived as the most important and the most insurable. Risks for the people involved were not taken into account until much later and often under pressure from the surrounding society and the State.

Thus, it appears pertinent to us to open our collective thinking by examining this notion of risk in agriculture and in the rural world. We propose to do this first of all by questioning the

² Article 22 of the UDHR of 1948: 'Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.'

perception of risks in the populations concerned, since what is at issue is responding to their needs.

The other questions will come later... For example, who decides on the importance of the risks to be covered? Are there inevitable risks, whatever may be the country involved? In light of this hypothesis, all our different experiences can be useful for all our partners. If this is not the case, however, it will be necessary for international organizations to take these specifics into account when they propose solutions.

Second Theme: Variations around solidarity in the rural milieu

In the face of individual and collective risks, the individual alone is often quite disarmed. In the past, various societies brought some security to individuals through the family, sometimes extended in rural communities by religious institutions, townships, or charitable works.

It was only later that companies or associations founded on an explicit contract and free adherence by individuals by means of regular dues or contributions came into existence. The first forms of solidarity that were widespread were the **mutuals or tontines**, which were limited by the types of risk involved. In any case, it will be one of the major objectives of the Colloquium organizers to establish a comparative evaluation of the forms of private or public organization, either spontaneously organized or motivated by broader movements that were subsidized or not.

Whatever may be the case, in the institution of modern forms of social insurance for salaried workers as well as for independents, the **framework of the nation-state** has often been a decisive one. For the example of France, it was national legislation that imposed obligatory contributions for illness, accident, old-age, family and other insurance. The authority of the State was necessary to generalize social insurance, which supposed making the contributions obligatory, since no private institution had this power. However, the State also played a role of facilitator, by accepting to finance some part of the benefits paid to farmers and farm workers through taxes. The role of the State is thus a central one in a double way and this role of the **Social State** reinforced its legitimacy in the eyes of the people concerned.

Today, when states are faced with increasing problems, many voices, especially in international circles, call for exploration of other ways of financing insurance. Is this possible and what might be the ways to achieve such ends?

Third Theme: Social status, specific needs, diversity of guarantees

In order to envision the diversity of guarantee systems, we need to start from examination of the various statuses to be found in the rural world. The major distinction here is that between **independent workers** (the head of their farms) and **dependent workers** (salaried), but there are also intermediate categories, such as sharecroppers, family assistants, debt workers and so on. Historically speaking, the ways that social insurance systems were set up were very different for salaried workers and independents, even though they are managed today by the same main organization, as is the case in France in the Mutualité sociale agricole.

Thus, before launching into any prospectives for the future, we need to establish an evaluation of the present, for the simple reason that we are not all that well informed about experiences, even in other nearby European countries.

This historical approach can lead directly to today's issues. How should we develop social insurance for agricultural workers around the world? How can we respond to the challenges of globalization? How can we assure protection for migrant, seasonal or permanent workers?

Fourth Theme: what is the place in this debate of women in the rural world?

If the issue of social insurance for salaried women workers does not pose a major problem – at least theoretically – this is obviously not the case for women farmers and farm workers and women in the rural world more generally, who are often the most numerous. After having made an evaluation of this situation, how can we frame the question and find a solution for the highly frequent under-protection of women in agriculture?

This under-protection of women, and not only of rural women, is especially pertinent in Third World countries. How can we overcome this difficulty? In order to attempt a response, we can examine the many experiments undertaken today in the South. Might these experiments provide a response not only for women but for the whole of social insurance?

3 – Practical organization

If you would like to submit a proposal for a paper to be given in the Colloquium, the proceedings of which will be published, we request you send the **summary of your project before 15 September 2009**, indicating which theme it comes under, to the following address: Katia.Barragan@univ-nantes.fr.

The steering committee will establish the final program in light of the proposals received. All pertinent information will be available on the website of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Ange-Guépin: <http://www.msh.univ-nantes.fr> (See the rubrique/heading : manifestations scientifiques/Scientific Events > colloques/Colloquia).

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