

Visitor from India very impressed about F.-W. Raiffeisen

President of the Indian Cooperative Union was in Hamm and Weyerbusch

The idea of cooperative unions may have been born in Germany, but the biggest number of members it has nowadays in India. 230 million people belong to the cooperative movement on the subcontinent. The president of the National Cooperative Union of India now visited our region following the traces of F.W. Raiffeisen.

“He was a great man, whose ideas have influenced the social aspects of millions of people worldwide until now. I am impressed to learn so much about his biography during my visit.”

These are the words Mr. Amin wrote into the guest-book of the Raiffeisen-museum in Hamm.

It was his first stop during his one-day-trip following the traces of Friedrich-Wilhelm Raiffeisen. In the afternoon he visited the Raiffeisen-meeting-center at Weyerbusch and to the academy of German Cooperative Unions at Montabaur. In Hamm President Amin was guided through the museum by the parson Dr. Dr. Klein, a profound expert of Raiffeisen.

Of course the “friends of local history”, the founder and promoter of the museum, contributed their knowledge about Raiffeisen, too. Their spokesman, 85 years old Kurt Salterberg said: “We are very honored and pleased to welcome such an important and interesting personality within our walls.”

During a common dinner with the mayor of Hamm and some other officials the Indian guest informed about details of the cooperative movement in his country. He explained, that in India there are about 500.000 cooperative union organizations with about 230 million members. In comparison with Germany: In Germany all Volks- and Raiffeisenbanken together have about 17 million members. If you compare the population from India and Germany (82 million to 1,2 billion) then one can say, that the percentage of members is very similar.

Amin declared, that nowadays in India almost every village has a cooperative, which furnishes the local farmers with fertilizer and seed and gives financial aid to them. In periods of low prices they store the farmers products until prices recover. During that time the farmers draw a credit to keep up their living.

In India cooperatives are promoted by government and law and so they are strong enough to ignore the wholesale-level and achieve better prices for their products.

Although the cooperative movement is very popular in India, the name of F.-W. Raiffeisen ist not so well known. The Indian movement has its roots in the activities of Robert Owen (Owen Rochdale Friendly Cooperative Society, U.K.), who founded the first cooperative already 160 years ago, while Raiffeisen started his first cooperative just 140 years ago, explained Mr. Amin on question.

But nevertheless, Mr. Amin seemed to be impressed after the visit of the museum and he declared: “Back in India, I will write an article about F.-W. Raiffeisen, so Indian people will learn more about that great character, who’s ideas are still prosperous worldwide.

And he concluded: “Raiffeisen is in best community, in India the great Mahatma Gandhi was the father of our national cooperative movement.”