

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,—

The time has again arrived for you to assemble and deliberate on many questions of moment affecting the mining industry. Your Annual Conference now commencing in the year 1895 will have to deal with subjects of such importance as have not been to deal with for a considerable number of years. Vital questions, so-called, have been for several years now in a transition condition, and some of them are in that condition at the present moment, although only in a limited sense. What at one time might have been said to be questions to be dealt with in the dim and distant future are now questions ripe for legislative enactment. I have no doubt that every delegate to this Conference will see the gravity of the situation, and so comport himself as to deal with the subjects coming before him, intelligently and with that mature judgment expected of those who represent such a vast body of underground toilers, and whose interests so closely affect those of the general community. During 1893 we passed through one of the most severe ordeals possible for any body of workmen to experience in any country or any age. Your big fight, which extended over one-third of the year, ended as most people believed satisfactorily, and much to your credit. The ending of the wage difficulty consequent upon the resumption of work at the old rate of wages, did not finally close the chapter as to what should be done in the future. The legacies left by 1893 to be dealt with in 1894 were formidable in themselves, and as subsequent events shewed, were of a most delicate

character. When I mention these legacies every gentleman in this room will know what is meant by the terms of formidable and delicate as applied to those legacies.

LEGACIES.

The first legacy to be dealt with was that of the formation of a Board of Conciliation to settle all difficulties connected with the wage question in the Federation area. That, as you know, created much discussion, and a good many meetings in 1893. Such discussions were continued in 1894, and ultimately a Board was formed and fully equipped to do the work relating thereto. One of the first things to be dealt with was the settlement of rules to guide and control those connected with the Board. I have no need to say that the discussion relative to those rules created much division of opinion, and several sharp altercations. Eventually a code of rules was agreed to, subject to confirmation by the gentleman appointed as Chairman of the Board. The appointment of the Chairman of that Board, which I may describe as being a thorny as well as a formidable and delicate subject, was at last made. The Speaker of the House of Commons was finally called upon to deal with the question. His choice fell upon the Right Hon. Lord Shand. Now, with regard to this appointment, I have nothing to add to what I gave expression to at the time, and so far as our connection with Lord Shand is concerned, we who have to do the work have had very little cause to complain as to his conduct in the chair. The powers of the Chairman of a Board such as were given to Lord Shand by the settlement under Lord Rosebery, were great and so comprehensive that to unduly complain of any action he took would be unfair, unwise, and indiscreet. Lord Shand, in giving his decisions on the rules as ultimately formed, no doubt, looked upon them from an independent standpoint—from the standpoint of a trained legal mind. Probably he had more of law and legal procedure in his mind when doing so than any other influence which possibly or probably could have been brought to bear upon him. One thing, we can fairly say, that when he sat at the head of the table, he treated us courteously and gave us every facility, and, in his own way, did his best to facilitate the passing of the rules which completed the formation of the Board.

The question of wages was another legacy left for the year 1894, and that subject is so well known in all its bearings that there needs very little to be said here as to how, why, and when it was disposed of. At the same time I wish it to be clearly understood that the owners' demands in 1893 were never got rid of until the decision arrived at by the Board last July. The owners, smarting no doubt under what they considered a terrible defeat, were for some time kept in abeyance so far as concerted action was to be taken, and this was because of the high prices of the coal in November, December, and January, 1893-4. Those prices continued to be very high considering the condition of the market and the trade of the country. However, as the time approached for the meeting of the Board to try and arrange the wage question, some owners tried deliberately, by keen competition, to pull down the price of coal. For three months after that action commenced very little was said in any quarter about asking for a reduction in wages in 1894. In fact, I had it given to me personally by some connected with large collieries, that in their judgment there was no need for a reduction, and that no reduction would be sought in 1894 by Derbyshire, and possibly not by Yorkshire. Events crowded on events; there were mutterings in Lancashire and some other counties that trade was depressed and the prices low, and that consequently the owners must have a substantial reduction in wages. The owners ultimately desired a meeting of the Board. The requisition was so worded as not to bring it within the rules of the Conciliation Board, and I advised that we should not meet the owners, but that if the owners desired any reduction in wages they must put it as a formal resolution as directed by the rules established by the Board. Eventually it was arranged that an informal meeting should take place—not under the Board—between the representatives of the employers and the workmen to take this vexed wage question into consideration. After several meetings it was finally agreed

- I. That the present rate of wages be reduced from August 1st, 1894, by taking off the last two advances of 5 per cent each, and that the wage remain at that rate till 1st January, 1896.
- II. That for a period of two years, from 1st August, 1894, the rate of wages shall not be below 30 per cent. above the rate of wages of 1888, nor more than 45 per cent. above the rate of wages of 1888.
- III. That from the 1st January, 1896, to 1st August, 1896, the rate of wages shall be determined by the Conciliation Board within the above-named limits.
- IV. That the Conciliation Board shall be continued for this purpose for two years, from the 1st August, 1894.

I have no need to tell any of the representatives who are here to-day, and who attended the meetings referred to, that it required much patience as well as tact and ability to bring about such a settlement. Any agreement embodying a ten per cent. reduction was bound to create friction, even amongst those who had entered into prior arrangements which prevented them rejecting a reduction in wages where the owners could by any reasonable means prove they were entitled to the same. As I have said before in other documents, judging from the prices and conditions of labour prevailing in 1890-1, when the prices were said to be at their highest point, and comparing the prices in 1894 and the condition of trade then existing, no doubt to take such facts and arguments would shew that a reduction in wages was inevitable; and however much some amongst us might kick, it was utterly impossible to get out of the agreement entered into before Lord Rosebery. But apart from this, I venture to say now, after the experience we have had during 1894, that the miners within the Federation area are much to be envied under that agreement. As is well known now, in consequence of this arrangement, other districts which were threatened with a reduction have not been reduced. Our friends in the North were told, I think by notice, that a further reduction in their wages was inevitable. However, it is quite clear that the battles fought—the physical and the scientific battles fought—have done yeomen service for all classes of workmen in the mining industry outside as well as inside the Federation area; and there is no doubt, in my mind, that the two years' arrangement has settled the question, not merely for the Federation area, but for the miners connected with the National Union as well. As is well known, South Wales has an area to itself, and, they are, like Tennyson's stream, constantly falling downwards. Human nature among miners is just as much human nature as in any other community—touch their pocket and you touch human nature; and those of us who have to try and take stock and understand as well as we can the present and possible future conditions, are bound now and again to tender advice which may be as unpalatable and indigestible as the skin of a rhinoceros.

In my judgment the securing of a minimum rate of wages was one of the greatest strokes of business that has been done in Trade Union matters since creation. Many efforts were made in years gone by to determine this matter, but the boon was not then secured. And why? Because leaders of the men have done more to check and hinder it than all the employing classes put together; they have told you time and again that these objects were mere chimeras which were now and again being evolved from some minds, and were simply indications of idiocy. My reply, whenever such remarks have been either near or remotely applied to myself, has been that the dreams of to-day were the realities of to-morrow. Several dreams, so-called, have resulted in being realities of the to-morrow, and I have no hesitation in asserting that other dreams that are dreamed will ere long be actualities. The minimum wage was declaimed against by some of our Northern leaders in such a way as called forth strong reprobation even from outsiders. Some even within our own ranks wanted to know if we were going to lead the men into pit-falls, distress, and ruin. I am thankful to say that the advice

tendered and the advice followed and acted upon, has brought about what so many not only believed but said would never be accomplished, and that what we aimed at is now a reality. The dream of the minimum wage is now not a pitfall or a feverish attempt, but a strong and healthy plant in the forest of industry. The taunts that we received in regard to determining whether we should have a wage apart from the selling price equally applies in a sense just now described. We were told that we could not enforce the living wage, but we did enforce it, with the result that the men have received food and raiment and some luxuries to a degree which they had not partaken of in the previous ten years. Then it was said, "Yes, but wait till the testing time comes; then we shall soon find whether or not this is real." Now, gentlemen, the testing time came in 1893. It was in 1888 when you began the arduous effort to obtain the living wage. In 1893 the testing time did come, and how did you stand the test? For 16 or 17 weeks you battled with the right against the millions of might, and you succeeded in maintaining that living wage. Therefore, I may fairly say that all these taunts, all these gibes, and all these false prophecies, are now well known to you throughout the length and breadth of the country, and even in every country in the world. What you have done, what you have endured, and what you have succeeded in obtaining and retaining, has been appreciated by the miners in France, in Belgium, in Germany, in Austria, in America, and in the colonies. Letters and telegrams have come to hand thanking you for the great victory obtained in the name of Trade Unionism, and I don't think I shall be saying anything contrary to fact if I declare that your recent victory, what some people call a peaceful and moral victory, has been one of the greatest victories ever achieved, either by nations or by communities—viz., that of bringing about a peaceful end for a period of two years such a gigantic struggle as was commenced in 1888, and completed in 1894.

EIGHT HOURS BILL.

The Parliamentary action taken by the Federation during 1894 has been rather extensive, especially in regard to the Eight Hours Mines Bill, and the Employers' Liability Bill. With regard to the former what was done was in accordance with your resolution at the Annual Conference, in which it was urged that every effort be made to secure the passing of the Bill during the session of 1894. Men were appointed from almost every mining district to interview members in the Lobby of the House of Commons; delegates were sent from a large number of Collieries to the House, pressing for the passing of the measure; and your Executive used every means to bring pressure to bear in order that the Bill might be passed into law during the session. The second reading was carried by a majority of 87; and it was hoped that having passed by such a large majority there would be little fear, if opportunity only offered, of carrying the Bill into law this session, so far as the House of Commons was concerned. Great opposition was offered to the second reading of the measure by the representatives from Durham and Northumberland, and by Mr. David Thomas, one of the members for Methyr. These gentlemen left no stone unturned to bring about the defeat of the bill. After the second reading was carried, the Government promised to give facilities for passing the bill, and the Government pledged themselves to see the bill through on condition that the House of Commons were prepared to carry the measure. After this became known several Honourable Members began to find fault with the Government for making these public and private pledges, and some even went so far as to intimate that they would not support the Government if the Bill was carried, or if the Government intended to give facilities for the passing of the Bill. The members from Durham, during the debate on the third reading, threatened the Government as to their support if the Government acted as it was anticipated they would act in giving their support to the Bill. Well, the Government, as a Government, never gave their support to the Bill as a bill, but those members of the Government pledged to the Bill have been faithful to their pledges, and when opportunity has occurred they have not only spoken but voted in favour of it. During the debate on the third reading some of the members found themselves in very awkward positions. One of the Irish members came to me and declared that

representatives from the North had stated that if the Irish members voted for the Bill they would not support the Irish party in obtaining Home Rule. My reply was that I did not think that any member connected with the two Northern counties had any authority to say so, and that I did not think any of them, apart from the Eight Hours Bill altogether, would, if they declined to support Home Rule, ever have a chance of coming back to the House of Commons as representatives of Northern constituencies. I considered, and I told him so, that the men in the North were Home Rulers in all its stages, and I said that I could not conceive of their attempting to defeat the Home Rule Bill either by their abstaining from voting or voting for local option. However, as you found out, five Irish members did vote for Local Option on the Eight Hours Bill, and others declined to vote or absented themselves from voting in favour of the Bill. Such men as Mr. Alfred Illingworth, Mr. H. J. Wilson, Mr. Brunner, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, and Mr. John Morley will most certainly assist in wrecking the Liberal party, if the Government listen to what they have got to say. It may be true that the wealthy millionaires of whom I have spoken were at one time Radicals as then understood, but they cannot lay claim to be Radicals in the present day, seeing that their Radicalism dates back to such an ancient period as 25 years ago. They never seem to have made any real progress with respect to those pressing social questions which are coming to the front and demanding settlement by the present generation. Simply because one's grandfather was a Radical, and the children have traded on that idea for a couple of generations, was scarcely sufficient to constitute a Radical in these days if the man had not advanced beyond the point of view of his grandfather's. Therefore if the present Government are simply going to take note of the Sir Joseph Peases, the Sir James Joyces, the Thos. Burts, the John Wilsons, and the Charles Fenwicks, as representing the true idea and ideals of the working classes and the democracy of the country, then even such a Government will be swept away at the first opportunity. My own opinion, however, is, that the majority of the present Government are in close touch with the feelings, aims, and aspirations, of the social democracy as understood and defined by Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Jacoby, Sir Walter Foster, Mr. Acland, Sir Robert Reid, Sir Frank Lockwood, Lord Rosebery, the Marquis of Ripon, and Lord Coleridge.

I don't think there is any need, after all, to refer to anything that has been said by some so-called leaders, who shall be nameless, as to whether good can be done by either one party or the other, but when we remember that on this Eight Hours question, not merely the leaders, but the bulk of the rank and file of the Liberal party have assisted in carrying the Bill so far on its way to the House of Lords, I, for one, cannot see my way clear to recommend the stopping of all progressive measures for a century by advising working men not to take hold of any and every party that may be able to assist in passing measures into law which may ameliorate the condition of all classes of toilers. Some of the gentlemen I have alluded to who voted for us at the second reading of the Eight Hours Bill also voted against us on the question of local option. When the Bill during the third reading debate came to such a tragic end in consequence of defaulters and doubtful friends—an end which nobody anticipated—these men were ready enough to say afterwards that they were not going to vote for a Mines Bill which made it compulsory for every man to work in a mine not more than eight hours per day. What I, as a miner, cannot understand is, that working men in numerous constituencies persistently vote for members who declare that they will not be parties to a bill which secures to the mining population an Eight Hours day from bank to bank and that each day shall be within the 24 hours of each separate day in the week, especially when I know that the Trade Union Congress, apart from the members from the North, have adopted resolutions in favour of the Mines Eight Hours Bill. I cannot, therefore, understand why such constituencies should send members continually to the House who are opposed to the interests of the working classes. We have been told by the leader of the Tory party that he is not in favour of the Mines Eight Hours Bill; we have been told by the late Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, that he would not be a party to any such bill; we have been told by the majority of

the rank and file of the Tory party that they will not be parties to passing such a bill into law, hence I contend that the highest wisdom for the mining population is to support those men and that party who are willing now to pass into law those measures we are seeking to place on the statute book. If I am asked how I can sympathise with millionaire employers of labour who profess to be Liberal in everything but the real thing, I say I have no sympathy with such a class, and I also have no sympathy with Mr. Oldroyd when he declares that he won't vote for the second reading of the Bill; neither have I any sympathy with Mr. Walton, who represents one of the most Radical constituencies, or with Mr. Herbert Gladstone, any more than I have sympathy with Mr. W. Laweis Jackson, who has made a fortune, as I take it, out of the working people; or with Mr. G. W. Balfour, who has done his level best to obstruct and prevent the passing of the Bill. Mr. Shaw Lefevre and Mr. Illingworth have both gone out of their way to attack the principle of the Bill, and to denounce the promoters as though they were going to split up the Liberal party. In my judgment Mr. Shaw Lefevre won't come to much harm, even if the Government were destroyed to-morrow, because men who can vote for the second reading of a bill containing a principle, and only one principle—that of eight hours from bank to bank in any one day constituting 24 hours—and then who will vote to introduce another and a new principle, that of Local Option, is a public man utterly unworthy the name of a politician, and one no party would consider it worth their while to hang on to his skirts. As to what has been done in the past we are now told that such occurrences will not obtain in the next session of Parliament. With regard to the future, I can only say that the good we have done in the past shall not be lost sight of, and renewed efforts will be made to bring as much influence as possible to bear on members of the House of Commons to get the Bill through next session; and if it is a fact that the House of Lords are going to run a tilt against all measures affecting working men, we shall then know whether it is to be the classes and the masses opposed to each other, or whether the classes will accept such arrangements by law between Capital and Labour as shall be considered to be by the vast majority of the people mutual arrangements for the benefit of the trade and industry of the country. I hope sincerely that the Government will take the advice tendered to it by representatives from Northumberland and Durham, and make the Eight Hours Bill a Government measure, because, by their action last session the Government got as much blame from the Northern members as if they had made the Bill their own; and using the old adage, they may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY BILL.

The following resolution expresses the opinion we all have on the question of the liability of owners to pay compensation for injury to any of their workmen, which was passed at an Executive Committee Meeting on February 13th, 1894, at the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, and which reads as follows, viz. :—

“That this Executive of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, now sitting, hereby informs the Right Honourable Mr. Asquith, M.P., and the Government that we strongly urge upon them to resist the amendments of the Lords to the Employers' Liability Bill, and also urge them to adhere to the Bill as it left the House of Commons, also that we are entirely opposed to any contracting out of the Bill.”

The Government, I may add, adhered to the Bill as it emerged from the Grand Committee on Law. Mr. Woods and other labour members made a good fight for the Bill in this committee, which, after all, although passed by the House of Commons, when it reached the Upper House was rejected with scant courtesy. The Noble Lord, the leader of the Opposition, said some very spiteful things about Trade Unions and their leaders. In fact, he declared Trade Unionistic work as the worst work under the sun, or at least that is the only inference to be drawn from the tone of his speech, and the remarks he made when the Bill was under discussion in the House of Lords. My advice to-day is never go in for Local Option in matters affecting the life, limb, and health of the toilers

of this country. However awkward this may be for the employers of labour, seeing the works are controlled principally now by large syndicates without soul or sympathy with regard to the workers where profit and loss comes in, they must be made by law to provide all known means, scientific or otherwise, to carry on their works with safety and protection to the worker. Where such is not done, or where unless the worker has actually killed or injured himself, for every other class of death or injury, I would make compensation for the same the first charge on the said concern. I also trust you will once more ask the Government to stand to the Bill as it passed the House of Commons during the session of 1894.

THE CONFERENCES.

During the past year conferences and congresses have been held in Leicester, Carlisle, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Norwich, and Berlin. The Leicester meeting was your annual conference, which arranged the work for the ensuing year, as the conference held this week will do for the coming year 1895. The Conferences and Congresses held in London were for special purposes, viz., relative to the Eight Hours Day and the Joint Board and Wage Question. The Carlisle Conference was one of very great importance, and the results of which led to a terrible struggle in the coal trade in Scotland. The owners there demanded a reduction in wages of some 25 per cent., which the men resolutely refused to accept. At subsequent meetings connected with the Federation, resolutions were agreed to that the utmost support possible should be given to these men during the struggle; and so far as my information goes, men who were receiving very small wages paid very well considering the ordeal they were themselves passing through consequent upon the short time worked. It appears from the balance-sheet, which will be read over to you this week, that the sum raised for the Scottish miners was £76,270 5s. Under the circumstances this, I think, is a noble sum for a body of workmen to subscribe to their brethren to aid in preserving wages, especially when it was fully understood that at least one-half of the men assisted were non-unionists. Whether the sum of money subscribed has been as much as might have been raised is a question which I cannot deal with here. There is no doubt that some men who might have subscribed more refused to do so, but when we take into consideration all things surrounding the various districts, we can fairly congratulate ourselves upon the fact that no other Federation ever raised such sums to pay to any men during one strike. Whilst you are told that Durham and Northumberland are the perfection in Trade Unionism, and that they assist others more than any other Trade Union, the figures which I have just stated give a remarkable contrariness to such a hypothetical and idyllic story. I think the men have done nobly in supporting their Scotch brethren, and I am sorry that owing to one cause or another (one of them, I am afraid, internal dissensions) the men lost the battle, and had to resume work on the employers' terms. The lesson to learn from the Scotch struggle is that the men must all be united; they must have a central fund, and then it may be possible, by thus acting together, to win a battle even in Scotland against the Scotch lairds. The Edinburgh Conference had something to do with the Scotch stoppage, therefore I need not deal with what happened immediately after that gathering. With regard to the Newcastle Conference much has been said since it took place as to why no further conference should be held. I have no need to remind you that we were badly treated at that Conference, and that it was neither the fault of the Chairman nor of anyone representing the Federation that it proved abortive. The Newcastle Conference could, had it desired to act on the lines of the old National Union voting power, and the voting power of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, have terminated the business there and then. But no; in consequence of the Conference being held in Newcastle, where the Northern men could send large numbers of delegates to the Conference, they had, so far as numbers went, the strength of the Conference, and they entirely objected to voting by the numbers of men represented when they were in the minority, although the chairman told them very quietly, and that was the cause of so much noise on the other side, that if a vote was taken at all on any main question, they would have to

vote by numbers represented. So far as the adjournment was concerned the majority—that is, the Durham people—having their enginemen, cokemen, and underground men there, as well as the Northumbrian people having their full strength there, carried the vote, although it was well known that several had left before the vote was taken on the adjournment. That resolution declared that the calling of the Conference would be left in the hands of the officials of the Miners' Federation. Prior to that, I had declared that I would not be a party to any such like meetings on the ground that neither Durham nor Northumberland were willing to co-operate with the Federation of Great Britain either on law relating to mines or on the wages question. I considered then, as I do now, that it would be futile to have any conference where the men had declared that they would not be a party to any wage rate, or give any support to the Mines' Eight Hours Bill. These being the cardinal factors of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, we could not seriously attempt to meet men whose object was to simply persist in making statements which had been so often made before relative to the unwillingness of Durham and Northumberland to act with the miners in the Midlands and the south on these two great questions. Since the Newcastle Conference the Conciliation Board has arranged the wages question, therefore we could not meet with any other body to debate as to whether we should change our course of action with regard to the wages question. Then on the point of the Eight Hours Bill. There has been a big debate in the House of Commons, and the miners of the north, through their representatives, declared they would be no party to any such legislation, therefore making it impossible for any meeting to be held to in any way influence or affect these two points. If it was not for bickering and strife what other object could be in view in holding such a conference. The miners of Durham were told with every courtesy that the Federation of Great Britain could be no parties to such a conference, owing to the altered condition of things since the Newcastle Conference. The Northumberland people were told when they applied to join the Federation of Great Britain that they could only do so on condition that they would act loyally with the Federation on the wages and eight hours questions. They declined to join the Federation because such a condition must be loyally subscribed to. The Durham leaders knew perfectly well that there were no points in common for them to debate upon in conference; therefore, I could not understand why they so persistently desired the conference, because as a Federation, they were firmly convinced, without argument, that to hold such a conference would be unwise, unjust, and unfair. Unwise on the grounds above stated; unjust to the conditions arrived at under the Board of Conciliation, and unfair to seek to unsettle the minds of their men and the employers at a time when every one was seeking to do his best to keep peace in the coal industry.

The Norwich Congress has been one of great importance, not so much in regard to the resolutions passed thereat, but in consequence of the delegation of its powers to the incoming Parliamentary Committee. As is now well known, the Committee have revised the Standing Orders, and a great many people consider they are very drastic. In fact, if the Congress is the Augean stable it has been represented, such standing orders will most certainly purge and cleanse it. I have no hesitation in saying that it needs some drastic remedy, to sweep it out and clear it, in order that in the future it may be what it styles itself, the Trades Union Congress. Without attempting to differ with those who take opposite views, or those who have no views on Trades' Union matters at all, I only repeat what I have stated time and again, that those who represented Labour in any form whatever should have Labour behind their backs and numbers on their rolls, to give some idea that they did actually represent others than themselves. If it is to be a Trade Union Congress, those who attend as delegates should be in direct touch with the workers. I am not one of those who believe that a man should not attend the Congress simply because he is not actually working at his own trade, but. I am one of those who consider that every delegate should be either working at his own trade or permanently employed in doing work for the trade he used to work at, or for some other trade. I see nothing drastic in

the new revised Standing Orders—in fact it is nothing new in any Miners' Association to have a code of rules similar to those adopted by the Parliamentary Committee. Your Standing Orders are substantially the new Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Committee. In trade union matters men who know nothing about the trades, men who are rather formed for Parliamentarians or Socialist Lecturers, have no right whatever to hang themselves on to the skirts of a few hundred people, or even a few thousand people, while their life's work is not in Trades' Unionism, but any other ism which appears to be most easily adopted and advocated. I see that Mr. Mawdesley has been giving his views on the Standing Orders in the "New Weekly." I don't think I have got much fault to find with what Mr. Mawdesley says, but am quite prepared to back him up, with the exception of his remark that those men who are seeking these positions are lazy; I would not like to be one to apply such a remark to any leaders in any cause. The only remark I wish to apply is that they should strictly and severely attend to their proper calling, and not seek to interfere with the work of the accredited Trade Union leaders. I don't see why editors of newspapers, except it be within the columns of their own journals, should attempt to pretend to be leaders of men in any other sense than applies through their avowed avocations.

With regard to this business of the Standing Orders in their entirety, I don't see that any real Trades' Unionist has anything to fear in the adoption of the new Standing Orders. I have no doubt that the men who are directly affected will scream, and will let the general public know where the shaft has found an entrance between the joints of the armour. It may not be seen on the surface but evidently there is keen feeling on the question already, and some parties are not forgetting to whine and cry out as if they had been stabbed in the dark. I can only hope that the Parliamentary Committee having now agreed to these Standing Orders, will consider the chapter finally closed; at all events, that they will advise the Congress to consider them adopted, because if Unionism is to be maintained as it ought to be, the only way is to take a course which will strike clear of all such complications, for, as the old adage has it, you cannot touch pitch without chemical action following.

The Congress which was held in Berlin was to some extent successful. We had a great deal to do to get this International Congress held at Berlin, but those who attended that meeting, and were eye witnesses of what occurred, will agree with me that although as a matter of fact commissioners of police were seated on the platform, the business was allowed to be conducted in our own way, and with as much freedom as if we had no police stationed in the hall. In fact, delegate after delegate said some of the most startling things, so much so, that if the Government had intended to interfere they might have done so probably scores of times during the week's work. This Congress, which was the 5th of the series, and which was held in what is known as the Concordia Saale, on 14th to 19th May, was attended by 38 delegates from Great Britain, 39 from Germany, 2 from Austro-Hungary, 4 from France, and 3 from Belgium, representing upwards of a million of miners. During the week good work was done, and the only thing I was afraid of was that the Government were making it too possible to continue the sittings for our friends across the Channel, and I am afraid there was too much readiness to find fault with anything and everything in order to bring about wrangling and dissatisfaction. On Thursday, especially, things were rather bad, and they culminated on Friday in a statement having to be made by the English Chairman which caused almost a sensation. When the hall was engaged it was engaged for all the days in the week except Saturday, and only until about two o'clock in the afternoon on the Friday. It was a great pity that our friends did not allow the limitation of the speeches, in order that the business might be completed within the regulation time, because on the understanding that the business would be finished on the Friday most of the delegates from England had made arrangements for the return journey. However, the Congress did not terminate on the Friday, but was lengthened out to a Saturday sitting. I and the remainder of the officials and delegates from England did not attend on the Saturday, but two or three who had a quasi appoint-

ment did attend on that day, acted in the name of the British delegates, and assisted in completing the business. I ought also to say that this appointment was confirmed at the first subsequent meeting of your Executive Committee. The old committees were reappointed, and I was chosen as secretary, with Mr. Burt as treasurer. The next International Congress is to be held in Paris, and it is to be hoped that the Congress will run its natural course, and that obstruction will not be placed in the way of the business being finished and completed as desired and designed by the promoters of these Congresses. They are intended to bring about a fellow feeling between the miners on the Continent and the miners of this country, and, if possible, to place them on somewhat equal conditions of labour and of those necessary or accessory conditions peculiar to our dangerous industry. If this is gone about in a right spirit, and every nation does its best to carry out the objects intended, then I have no doubt that sooner or later these ends will be consummated. If, on the other hand, men outside the Miners' Unions seek to dominate any particular nation, and try to create diversities of opinion on matters that do not affect the real interest of the worker, so far as his own trade or trade requirements are concerned, then the day will be far distant when any real good will accrue to the mine workers of the world.

THE TRADE OF THE COUNTRY.

For some time past we have heard many remarks made about depressed trade. Well, when one looks up statistics, one is surprised to find that all the indications show, not a diminishing but as practically increasing trade in this country. The Board of Trade returns during the last few months prove that there is good hope that we have reached the bottom in trade depression, and that in the future, if we have no further complications with foreign countries, and no convulsions in the political world, we may expect a steady growing trade in 1895. All the indications point that way. So far as trade is concerned, there appears to have been a decided improvement in the export trade, and, whilst we cannot flatter ourselves with having had too much work to do in the year, still it is clearly established that we have increased the output of coal by millions of tons in Yorkshire, and, no doubt, that will apply more or less to the whole country, notwithstanding that Scotland, or rather a portion of Scotland, has been laid idle for some four months. When people talk about depressed trade, they generally couple with that the idea of keen competition, and no doubt there has been this keen competition affecting the pockets of all those engaged in trade. It is no unusual thing for a colliery agent to go into the market with a fixed mind to sell his coal at say 10s. per ton—although those who employ him declare that to sell it at that price entails a great loss on the working of the colliery—and yet to leave the market after having sold his coal at 9s. per ton. The records in the local papers during the last few weeks show that colliery owners can yet afford to give coal away if their statements as made publicly can be taken as reliable at any particular date. During 1893 they declared that numbers of collieries were not paying; they declared in 1894 that numbers of collieries were not paying; and they will in 1895 declare the same thing. And yet we find that they are making bargains with railway and gas companies at prices which two years ago they would have thought simply ruinous. It is quite clear that sooner than not work their pits and so, according to their own statement, save money, they will keep running their pits at prices which they constantly declare are unprofitable. I have maintained for years now that collieries do pay, and I think I am perfectly justified in saying so.

If I turn to the statistics published year by year by the Government with respect to the assessed value of mines, I have ample proof that such is the case. I find in 1879 the assessed value of coal and metals as sold to the consumer at that date was £63,738,503, whilst in 1893 it had risen to £73,024,066. I also find that in 1883-4 the assessed value of mines was £7,640,806, whilst in 1893 it had increased to £12,040,001, or an increase of £4,982,195, thus clearly shewing that taking the two items stated to determine whether the trade is more valuable or

not, viz., what the mines are assessed at, and the value of the amount produced—the assessable value of mines is nearly five millions more, and the selling price of coal has been raised to nearly $9\frac{1}{2}$ millions more. One is therefore bound to come to the conclusion, as all business men must, that the collieries to-day are much more valuable, even if we have been passing through years of bad trade, so called, than they were ten years ago. If I take the other trades of the country, the staple trades, the same thing applies. Thus it will be seen in the coal trade that while in 1882 the output was 156,499,977 tons and the value was £44,118,409, the output in 1893 was 164,325,795 and the values for the year were £55,809,808. From this it will be seen that an increased turnover of eleven millions of money has been passing through the hands of the colliery owners for the sale of only eight millions additional tons of coal compared with 1882. Then if I take the paid up share capital of 1884 and compare it with that of 1893, I find an increase of about, in round numbers, 9,000 companies. In 1884 there were 8692 companies, and in 1893 17,555. The paid up capital in 1884 was £475,551,294; in 1893 it was £1,013,119,350, or an increase of $537\frac{1}{2}$ millions. I think I have no need to adduce any further evidence as to the vast growth of the trade of the country, and, I think I may also add, that the whole of this vast increase of the wealth of the country has been drawn from the bone, the blood, and the sinew of the toilers. I don't care what you call it—brain work, intellectual work, or physical work—the fact remains that from the applied capital of 1884 we see the vast increment I have just stated. Why should not the toiler hear more about those profits locally than he does at the present time, instead of hearing such whining complaints that every trade is going to the dogs. All these vast sums of money are made up from the various localities in the kingdom, therefore it is clear that those engaged in the acquisition of vast sums of money are constantly applying to themselves a greater share than under democratic manipulation would be granted to them—in fact, if toilers had greater command over the allocation of profits, then instead of such vast sums being distributed in the form they are at present, they would be more equitably divided, and, no doubt, as a result of this there would be a larger development in trade than we find existing at present.

Speaking about the coal trade, we have no hesitation in saying that vast sums have been earned during the last ten years. There are evidences all around us that those immediately connected with the trade not merely keep one establishment, but many; and they are constantly asking for outlets for surplus capital. I have no need to indicate who they are—you only have to read the papers to find out for yourselves—such, however, is the fact. Nevertheless, these persons are constantly complaining that collieries don't pay, and in order to show their kindness of manner and philanthropy of disposition, they negotiate to turn their men off, and ask them quietly to go somewhere else at this inclement period of the year. I will conclude my remarks on this matter by advising the men to read the Blue Books issued from the Houses of Parliament, and which now find their way to every district connected with the Federation, and they will be kept fully informed on these matters. I would also wish to remark that there cannot be a general increase in the values of the United Kingdom, and at the same time every locality be going to the dogs with lessened trade. That would be too paradoxical in any man with any common sense to utter; therefore you must take what colliery owners say about losses with more than a grain of salt, because you may rely upon it that the statistics which have been obtained from the colliery offices, and placed in the Blue Books, if they err at all, wont err on the side of exaggerating the values of the profits in the industrial concerns of this country.

I see, also, that the Parliamentary Committee have been indulging in passing a resolution which, if carried out, would have the effect of committing the Congress to support candidates only whom that Parliamentary Committee have approved of. Their suggestion is that if the General Election occurs before the meeting of the Congress in 1895, the Parliamentary Committee should call a special conference at Manchester, among other objects, "to decide an industrial

programme embodying the resolution agreed upon by this Congress, and which shall pledge the Trade Unionists of this country to vote for and support only those candidates who accept the programme of the Trade Union Parliamentary Committee." I cannot advise you to attend any such conference which may be called to take into consideration any such resolution. We believe in Home Rule in regard to our internal arrangements; and so far as I know the Federation we shall continue to act on the lines laid down during the last four or five years. Indeed, we could scarcely help ourselves, and now, when we are not merely able to do it for ourselves, but for others, I don't think we shall make such a radical change in our programme of work in this year of grace 1895.

With regard to the alteration of rules, you will find on the agenda some suggestions which, in my judgment, will be for the benefit of the Federation. We cannot go on in the future with laxity in the payment of levies or contributions to the funds of the Federation. I am not going to preach or prophesy with regard to these matters at this time. I only hope that the various districts in the Federation will see their way clear to make their rules as useful and as complete as possible under the circumstances. The Federation must be placed in a position to enforce its rules in every particular. The Federation has done well up to now, and there has been very little friction within its borders; therefore the suggestions on the agenda paper, many of which may be calculated to strengthen the weak places, are highly desirable.

I trust the business of the Conference will be begun and ended in peace and harmony and good will. There is a great work before the Federation. Colliery owners everywhere are seeking to unsettle, in a lesser or larger degree, the arrangements entered into in London before the Joint Board. Therefore it will take the Federation all its time, energy, and intellect to combat these subtle modes of seeking to bring about reductions, and to retain intact the minimum wage which you fought so gallantly to obtain. I wish you all a Happy New Year, and trust that goodwill may be maintained, not merely in this Conference, but in every branch and every association connected with the Federation.

Mr. W. E. HARVEY (Derbyshire) moved, and Mr. John Wilson (Lothians) seconded:—"That the best thanks of the Conference be given to Mr. Pickard for his address."