

## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Mr. S. WOODS then read the President's Address as follows:—

GENTLEMEN,

During the past year events have occurred which, if applied to the miners and the working classes generally, may be appropriately styled big events. When I say big events, I simply mean events that have occurred which affect, directly or indirectly, the pockets of the miner and the working men generally, or the health and condition affecting workers in this and other countries. Those of us who believe in the Living Wage will be pleased to learn that what took place about a year ago in Belgium has been consummated. In Brussels a wage has been fixed which the workers believe to be the living wage, and which evidently satisfies those who have been advocating a Living Wage to be fixed by Statute. In another part of the world—namely, in the Colony of Victoria—the Living Wage has been fixed by Statute law. In that Colony they have a fair sprinkling of Labour Representation in their Parliament, and with untiring zeal the leaders there have left no stone unturned to secure, if possible, a condition of things second to none in the whole world. They don't believe in sweating dens, they don't believe in three men having two men's wages—hence they come to the conclusion that in the work that is to be done, the right to live should be the first condition. I see also that in our own country another big event has occurred—namely, that of fixing the Eight Hours Day for various classes of workers connected with the North Eastern Railway Company. Another big event which occurred during the year is one that touches the pockets of every working man in the country; and I wish it to be clearly understood that I am not referring to this matter as a

question of politics (although in a large sense of the term it is a question of politics) namely, that of the Government of the day subsidising the agricultural interests with no less a sum than two millions of money. Now those two millions are bound to come from somewhere; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whoever he may be, will find himself in a tight place during the coming session if other trades ask to be relieved in a similar way. It was originally stated that these two millions of money were to be given to the tenant farmer, but it has now been proved beyond doubt that the greater portion of it will go to swell the incomes of such men as the Duke of Devonshire, the Duke of Westminster, the Duke of Bedford and a host of others who are land proprietors, both Liberal and Tory magnates of the country—in fact the money has gone to swell the enormous incomes they derive from the soil, and from other rents, such as ground and royalty rents, which they now enjoy year by year. When this question was under discussion in the House of Commons, Mr. Fenwick and others strongly pointed out that no trade was so distressed as the mining trade, and that if any money was in the national exchequer, capable of being devoted to distressed industries then the mining population—who were then working one and a half to two days a week, with an average sum of 5s. to take home per week,—were the persons most entitled to receive doles from the exchequer. The Government of the day would not listen to any such argument. It is clear, however, that whatever party professes to be friendly to the working classes, when they get into power they refuse to listen to the reason why relief should be given to the most distressed cases. In fact the monopolists cling tenaciously to power so that they may limit and control all the sources of the wealth and the industries of the country. Hence I say this question is a big question, and affects the workers in every class and degree, both in the larder, the pocket, and the household. Now there was another big event which might have been of a similar character to the one just referred to, viz., the relief of Voluntary Schools. The Government brought in a Bill, the object of which briefly was to curb the zeal and limit the resources of School Boards and supplement the Parliamentary grants to the Voluntary Schools to the tune of 4s. per scholar. This was intended to strike a blow at the working classes, for if anyone can claim the right to manage elementary education in our large towns, cities, and villages, it is the working classes. They have the power to appoint their own representatives on School Boards. They know exactly what they want their children to be taught. They have had the power referred to for the last twenty-five years, and now comes Sir John Gorst, as Vice-President of the Council, with a measure which would, at one fell swoop, have so endangered School Board management that in the course of a few years, if the same conditions were con-

tinued, it would almost have driven School Boards out of existence. Let the workers and workmen of this country decry rate-aided schools, state-aided schools, or any other schools where the workers' pence out of the rates and taxes, have to maintain them, and let them not allow such to be brought into existence, unless an equality of control is set up to manage the same by and through the representatives of the ratepayers. The opposition manifested to the Education Bill from all quarters of the House brought such a collapse of what was understood to be the main Bill of the Session, as has not been known during the time I have been one of your representatives in the House of Commons. No, Parliament would not agree to the curbing and narrowing of the Board Schools, and to making extra grants to Sectarian Schools. The 150 majority of the Government was powerless in face of the opposition from all parts of the House.

### THE LATE BOARD OF CONCILIATION.

Gentlemen, you are well aware that the Board of Conciliation existed from July 1894 to July 1896. The Board was composed of representatives from colliery owners and from workmen, and did in my judgment a most useful work. When we were free from the shackles of an independent chairman, the Board got into good work and settled the main questions at issue, viz. the ten per cent. reduction and the continuance of the arrangement without any further reduction for the remainder of the two years. I wish here to state that the owners were as anxious to be without an independent chairman as were the representatives of the workmen. No one seemed on the owners' side to have a clear idea what the Board should exist for, until it dawned upon them that they wanted a ten per cent. reduction. Then it was strenuously urged that the Board should continue on the original lines as indicated by the resolutions passed when the representatives of the owners and workmen met Lord Rosebery. Your representatives contended that the Board was an informal Board commencing in July, 1894, and ending in July, 1896, and that such Board had no relationship whatever to the one arising out of the Rosebery agreement. Well that Board ceased to exist at the end of July, 1896; and why did it cease to exist? (1) because it would not agree to an independent chairman; (2) because the owners considered one condition necessary, viz. a ten per cent. reduction off the workers' wages. In order that this point may be made clear I should state here that although colliery owners say they never asked for a reduction of wages, it is within the knowledge of this Federation that two propositions were sent to the workmen. One was that the Board should continue for two years longer on the old informal lines, such as had been going on from 1894 to 1896; and the other was that the men were to consider whether they would accept a ten per cent. reduction or not. The

first was the offer of the workmen; the second was the offer of the owners. Therefore it will be clearly seen that whatever the owners say now, or said immediately after these suggestions were made known to the public, it remains a fact that the owners made the condition of continuing the Board dependent on the said reduction of ten per cent. (3.) Because the men decided that they would not agree to any reduction in wages, and as a matter of fact no reduction of wages took place in the area of the Federation. (4.) Because your leaders believed there was no need for a reduction in wages, and because you believed trade would revive, and that if the owners agreed to what was proposed, not only trade but wages would revive also. The question of the continuance or discontinuance of the Board created a great fear in the country. The editors of newspapers, correspondents of newspapers, and commercial men generally, had great fear that a strike would occur during 1896, if the Joint Committee and the Board of Conciliation were discontinued. After all that has been said and done, and after all the fears that were expressed, peace and quietude have been the order, and now at the close of the year everybody seems to believe that the action of the Federation was justified, and probably that it would have been better for the owners and for the workmen to have had peace safeguarded for a further period of two years.

#### DURHAM, AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRANCE TO THE FEDERATION.

I wish also to remind you that Durham have decided, by ballot, to rejoin the Federation. It is well known that Durham once belonged to the Federation and took part in its proceedings, but eventually retired because they could not subscribe to the rules and regulations and principles of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. We were sorry at the time they took the course they did, because I believed then, and I believe now, that if the whole mining communities of this country could see their way clear to unite their powers—their numerical powers—their intellectual forces, and the commonsense bound up with their Associations—they would prove such a force in determining their own conditions of life and labour as no Government of the day or any set of monopolists could ultimately resist. A good deal has been said in regard to the conditions of membership connected with this Federation. Why there should be any doubt, especially amongst those who have once been members, is not a Chinese puzzle to me, but evidently it does puzzle some people. Hence many questions are put, especially in the two newspapers dominating the North of England—the “Newcastle Leader” and the “Newcastle Chronicle.” Now, the first condition of joining the Federation is that those who wish to join must make a formal application;—that is, they must send in to the secretary a

formal statement, and such statement shall contain the reasons why they wish to join. Second, they shall pay an entrance fee of £1 per 1000 members, or fractional part thereof. Third, that they loyally accept the conditions and loyally carry out the rules and principles of the Federation. Any Association, District, or Federation, desiring to join on these conditions, especially when it is an established fact what the entrance fee and what the rules and principles are, surely those who desire to enter after making full enquiry, will not raise obstacles where none are to be found. Now, what are its rules and principles?

#### WAGES.

First we have the principle of wages, and secondly we have the principle of a majority. Everyone knows by this time what the wages principle is. And everyone also knows that by Rule 20, the principle of majorities practically embodies the action of the Federation on any other question. A great deal has been said about the Federation interfering with local Associations. Now, firstly the Federation does not interfere with the management of local Associations or the settlement of purely local questions. Secondly, the societies have perfect home rule, inasmuch as (a) the principle of the Federation is that political economy as taught by the schools is not adopted or acted upon; (b) the principle of the Living Wage predominates, and its members believe that the workers should have the first claim to live as a resultant of their labours; (c) that no condition of competition shall intervene between the worker and wages, because in their judgment the giving away of values to middlemen should have no locus standi in determining the rate of wages they should work for; (d) they do not propose a sliding scale or a wages board, believing that sliding scales are out of date, and do not work satisfactorily; neither does it believe in a Wages Board working under similar conditions to a Sliding Scale; or where it has an independent Chairman to step in between the two parties with power to determine what the wages of the workmen shall be.

#### POLITICALLY.

First, it believes in active legislation for securing an Eight Hours Day from Bank to Bank by law. Second rightly or wrongly, it does not believe this can be obtained permanently for the country by Trade Union effort alone. Third, like all the older trade unions this Federation believes in Parliamentary effort to ameliorate the workers' conditions. Fourth, as a matter of fact, everything on the Statute book which has done the most good for the workers has been sought for and obtained by parliamentary action. Prior to 1842-4 an agitation was raised by miners and by public men such as Lord Shaftesbury, and others, to ameliorate the condition of the workers. It is a well known fact that, unless through legislative

action, there is scarcely any hope whatever of success. The old National Union therefore saw this, and set to work with a will, and for many years was successful in getting measures passed into law really ameliorating the condition of the workers both above and below ground. The Act of 1842 was one of the principal Acts passed by the Houses of Parliament, and everyone knows that this Act took the women and girls out of the pit bottom. The Acts of 1855-6 gave us Inspectors of Mines. The Act of 1872 gave us not merely inspectors of mines, but the right of inspecting mines by workmen; it also created the right of the workmen to appoint a checkweighman to weigh coal, and see justice done to the men. Now, why should we ask for a law to protect checkweighmen on the pit bank if trade unionism was and is the power some of our friends tell us it is? The Act of 1887 further developed the points of the Acts of 1842, 1855-6, and 1872. It also secured the right to the workmen to appoint a person working at other collieries to inspect any mine where the workmen at that mine desired such inspection. Now the old National Union always went in strong to secure protection for Trades Unionists. Hence we had the 1871 Trade Union Act. Then they went in strongly for the law of conspiracy to be amended, which came about in 1875. Then in regard to the Truck Acts. Be it remembered most of these Acts affected adult labour, and if the strong personality of Trades Unions could have been brought to bear as some believe there would have been no need for such Acts being placed on the Statute Books. I wish it to be remembered here, at all events, that the old National Union and the Federation are identical, because many of the workers of the Federation were actually, in past years, engaged in the work of securing the Acts of Parliament referred to, therefore it must not be taken for granted that those in the Federation have not been co-workers in the work of redemption as embodied in the statute book.

The Employers' Liability Act and other Acts, all dealing with the liberties of the subject, were advocated by the late Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Burt, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Fenwick, and all Labour Leaders. Now the question arises why do legislators decry legislation to assist in the shortening of the hours of underground workers, because no one can fairly contest this question owing to the fact that in all other departments of legislation adult labour is touched on every point. If it be true that we cannot go in for an Eight Hours Bill simply because it touches adult labour, then the game of politics is concluded, and the only thing to be done in the future is to administer the laws which we now possess. Well, gentlemen, I am strongly in favour of a legal day, because I think it the only reasonable way of securing universally shorter hours of labour underground. In 1887 I supported Mr. Donald Crawford, when he raised the point for the Scotchmen, and afterwards for the whole country. Since that time I have given

a great deal of care and time and effort to push it, and I was delighted the other day to find that one of our greatest opponents has pledged his son and heir to vote for the legal Eight Hours Day if returned to the House of Commons, viz., Sir Joseph Pease, Bart., J.P., M.P., Chairman of the North Eastern Railway Company. I am pleased to say he has practically decided for himself as well in favour of an Eight Hours Day for underground workers, because he would never pledge his son to do what he would not do himself.

### MINES REGULATION BILL.

Now we are going in for a Mines Regulation Bill, and the points I wish to enumerate are as follows:—(1) The Federation Bill contains further provisions to ensure the safety of the workers (a) in travelling roads; (b) in cases of carrying workmen up and down the shafts in the mine; (c) to make it compulsory to put safety catches on the cages; (d) better steam brakes on the engines. (2) There is the question of unskilled labour (a) to prevent minors under 21 years of age being engaged in work more than eight hours from bank to bank in any 24 hours; (b) to prevent persons who have not worked underground under 18 years of age doing so—that is if a person has not worked underground under 18 years of age he cannot be allowed to work in the mine after that age, (c) if this is carried out by law two things will be accomplished, first the prevention of unskilled labour entering the mines, and second the prevention of overcrowding and sweating in our mines. (3) We are seeking also more inspectors, and that the said increase of inspectors shall be from our own class. We are desirous of having say six or seven inspectors additional in the mining districts, all working under a chief in the said districts. Our desire is that there shall be one inspector for every 10,000 persons working above and below ground. Believing that inspection has had a tendency to increase the safety of our mines we think this demand not unreasonable, and ask that Government shall, out of the Exchequer, find the means so that the mines may be made even safer and more satisfactory than they are at the present moment. (4) We are also seeking to have better accommodation for the checkweighmen, when they are carrying on their work in the weighbox. At many collieries the owners will neither provide a box nor any place of shelter for the workmen's representative. I am pleased to say that the larger proportion of colliery owners, and a very large majority of them too, find the weighman a reasonable place wherein to do his work and so that he can carry out the late Act of Parliament. We also are seeking for the same power to dismiss the checkweighman as is now in the Act of 1894 to appoint him. We think it rather strange that workmen should be able to appoint a checkweigher and should have no means of properly discharging him. We think also that a checkweigher ought to know by whose authority he is appointed

and by whose authority he can be dismissed. As the law now stands it appears that a man can be appointed by a majority of the workmen and in slip shod fashion he can be dismissed by a certain section of the workmen. I also think that we should go in for a clause that will give the checkweigher power not merely to ask for his wages and compel it by law, but to ask for compensation or money out of the workmen's wages to pay for all work necessary, books and materials to carry on the said work.

### EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY BILL OF GOVERNMENT.

We are told that the Government intend to bring in a Bill this session dealing with this matter. Now the question arises, are we in the same frame of mind to-day we were in in 1888, when I was instructed by the Conference to oppose what was understood then as the 3rd clause of the Home Secretary's (Mr. Matthews) Bill. Everybody knows that that third clause gave the power to contract out of its clauses. Now I wish to say, first, we want a Bill doing away with the doctrine of common employment; 2nd, we want a Bill without a contracting out clause in it. Why? (a) Because we think great hardship has been done under the present Act; (b) because the onus of proof of neglect is thrown upon the workman; (c) because wherever the men are contracted out of the Act more persons are killed and injured than where the men are not so contracted out; (d) this was proved during the debate in the House of Commons, when the Bill of Mr. Secretary Matthews was before it. I then stated how many were killed by the London and North Western Railway and the Midland Railway, and proved conclusively during the debate that the facts pointed all in that direction; (e) I also shewed in my annual report of 1888 that where miners were not contracted out of the Act of 1880 such was the condition of things then. The following statistics were taken at that time to prove my statements :

#### STATISTICS BEARING UPON THE QUESTION OF DEATHS IN OUR MINES AND THE EFFECT OF LEGISLATION AS A DETERRENT TO RECKLESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS.

Average Death Rate in our Mines from the year 1851 to the year 1887 inclusive.

From	...	1851 to 1860	...	it was 1 in 245
From	...	1861 to 1870	...	it was 1 in 300
From	...	1871 to 1880	...	it was 1 in 425
From	...	1881 to 1887	...	it was 1 in 502

For the seven years before the passing of the Employers' Liability Bill, and for the seven years after the passing of the Employers' Liability Bill, the average is as follows:—

From	...	1874 to 1880	...	it was 1 in 432½
From	...	1881 to 1887	...	it was 1 in 502

Prior to the passing of the Act in 1872, we had an average of killed in and about our mines of ONE in 252½ persons employed; and after the passing of the Act, we had ONE in 463½ killed of the persons employed.

Prior to the passing of the Employers' Liability Bill, the average was, from 1851 to 1880, 1 in 320, and from 1881 to 1887, it was 1 in 502.

Thus it will be seen legislation has created a wonderful method or methods of saving life.

Yorkshire, and Lancashire and North Wales, compared with for the seven years prior to the Employers Liability Act, and seven years after the passing of the Act.

#### YORKSHIRE.

From	...	1874 to 1880	...	average, 1 in 500
From	...	1881 to 1887	...	„ 1 in 637

#### LANCASHIRE AND NORTH WALES.

From	...	1874 to 1880	...	average, 1 in 337
From	...	1881 to 1887	...	„ 1 in 368

#### DEATHS IN YORKSHIRE.

From	...	1874 to 1880	...	...	...	848	
From	...	1881 to 1887	...	...	...	699	
						149	
Reduction						...	149

Or a diminution under the Act of 17½ per cent. as compared with the seven years preceding the Act.

#### DEATHS IN LANCASHIRE AND NORTH WALES.

From	...	1874 to 1880	...	...	...	1504	
From	...	1881 to 1887	...	...	...	1396	
						108	
Reduction						...	108

Or a diminution under the Act of 7 per cent.

Thus it will be seen, that the Reduction in the Death Rate of Yorkshire amounts to 17½ per cent., whilst in Lancashire and North Wales the Death Rate is only reduced by 7 per cent.

#### YORKSHIRE.

Before the passing of the Act in Yorkshire, for the seven years, there was one death per 500 persons employed, and for seven years after the passing of the Act there was one in 637 persons employed, or an improvement of 27 per cent.

## LANCASHIRE AND NORTH WALES.

Before the passing of the Act in Lancashire and North Wales the death rate was one in 336 persons employed, from 1874 to 1880 inclusive, and for the seven years after the passing of the Act it was one in 368 persons employed, or an improvement of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

Thus it will be seen, that where there is no contracting out of the Act there is an enormous improvement in the saving of life in Yorkshire, whilst in Lancashire and North Wales, where the men are generally contracted out of the Act, there is but a slight improvement.

I have taken these mining districts because they are contiguous to each other, and because the work is in many respects equally similar.

Bord and Stall and Longwall work will, I am of opinion, be of about equal proportions.

Thus we have it demonstrated, by the above figures, non-contracting out of the Act means greater safety than where contracting out of the Act is allowed to obtain.

Whilst Yorkshire only lost one in 637 persons employed, Lancashire and North Wales lost one in every 368 persons employed in and about our mines. These figures speak for themselves. No further comment is needed to bring home the obvious deduction derivable therefrom.

Now, as everybody knows, Mr. Woods, since then, has made a statement bearing out the above conclusions. Later still, on a wider scale, the Labour Bureau connected with the Board of Trade have also gone deeply into this matter, and several newspapers have likewise dealt with it on the lines that I dealt with it in the year 1888. The Labour Bureau's statistics cover the first eleven months of 1896, and shew conclusively that wherever workmen are contracted out of the Act there are more serious accidents and greater loss of life than where there is no contracting out. It will be seen from the following quotation, which deals with the Midland, the London and North Western, the Great Western, the North Eastern, and the Great Northern, as well as the London, Brighton, and South Coast, and the London, Chatham, and Dover Railways, that the Board of Trade returns conclusively shew that any Government desiring to preserve the life and limb of the worker will not agree to a Clause protecting Insurance Societies or allowing any Employer of Labour to contract out its provisions:—

“The Midland allow its men complete freedom under the law, while the L. and N. W. Railway contract them out, and, as is well known, were the chief advocates of the clause which wrecked the Liability Bill. And here

is the startling result as shown in the Board of Trade figures for eight years:—

	L. and N. W.		Midland.	
	Killed.	Injured.	Killed.	Injured.
1888 .....	52 .....	547 .....	36 .....	85 .....
1889 .....	62 .....	825 .....	44 .....	144 .....
1890 .....	76 .....	925 .....	51 .....	143 .....
1891 .....	53 .....	922 .....	60 .....	94 .....
1892 .....	67 .....	762 .....	52 .....	124 .....
1893 .....	52 .....	646 .....	42 .....	67 .....
1894 .....	62 .....	692 .....	42 .....	117 .....
1895 .....	43 .....	626 .....	48 .....	116 .....
	467	5,945	375	890

Of course the North-Western employs the largest number of men, so we will look at the figures in the light of proportions. The average staff for the eight years of the North-Western was about 60,000, and of the Midland about 50,000. The proportion therefore comes out thus:

L. and N. W. ....	1 in 9	for whole period
Midland .....	1 in 40	„
	or	
L. and N. W. ....	1 in 72	per year
Midland .....	1 in 320	„

In other words, the “contracting out” line shows nearly five times as many accidents as the “non-contracting out.” For comparison, it is interesting to see that the next three longest lines (all non-contracting out) show for five years the following average yearly proportion of accidents to staff employed:—

G.W. ....	1 in 105
N.E. ....	1 in 125
G.N. ....	1 in 200

All much below the single large “contracting out” line. Taking two small companies doing a similar traffic, the one L.B. and S.C., “contracting-out,” and the other, L.C. and D. “non-contracting out,” we find the annual proportion of accidents to staff employed:

L.B. and S.C. ....	1 in 200
L.C. and D. ....	1 in 255

Even after all allowance is made for varying circumstances as affecting the figures, it must be admitted that this statistical evidence is remarkable.

Now the question arises what shall we do with the forthcoming Bill of the Government? It is definitely stated now that a Bill will be intro-

duced, and that it will have a proviso allowing contracting out of its provisions. That Sir Matthew White Ridley strongly asserted in 1895, and in 1896, when deputations from the Trades Union Congress met him. There is no dubiety therefore as to what the Government intend doing in this matter. What shall we do, I repeat? Shall we agree for contracting out, or shall we fight for deterrence against neglect? I strongly advise you that every pressure be brought to bear upon the Government urging them not to put in a clause allowing employers of labour to contract out of its provisions, either under Insurance Societies, Local Clubs, or any other means which will frustrate the design intended by an Employers' Liability Act. We want neither Assurance Societies nor any other societies mixed up with safety laws.

### TRADE.

Well, Gentlemen, very much has been said about Trade during the last year. First it was up, then it was down. First it was going to the dogs, then it had revived, and everybody was happy. But everybody has now come to the conclusion that at the end of the year there is now a revival in trade. I am pleased, for one, that men who were working a year or two ago, and for several years one, two, and three days a week are now working full time. In fact, at every colliery nearly managers are seeking to pull creation up in order to get the whole of the coal to the surface. What their object is I don't know, because they declare even now that with all the good trade and with all the output possible that prices are not profitable. One would think they would let their coal remain in the pit bottom for a month or two without trying to push the whole of it into trucks at the end of 1896 and the beginning of 1897. If it is said that in 1896 no revival. The iron and steel trades are booming, prices have gone up 10s. and 12s. a ton, the coke trade is in a more healthy condition than it has been for years. Three and four shillings a ton has been the rise in the value of coke. The house coal trade has gone up from 1s. to 1s. 6d., and in some cases 2s. per ton. All this is very well, and no doubt will tend to make matters better during the year 1897. If it is said that in 1896 no profits were made, I don't believe the statement. I am compelled to believe that profits do obtain, balance sheets declare such is the case, and if one would only take the trouble to go through all the balance sheets that have been issued in the various trades of the country—say in the "Sheffield Telegraph," the "Leeds Mercury," and other prominent papers—we should come to the conclusion that whatever might be said by coalowners, profits were yet obtainable even in what are termed depressed times. Well, the 30 per cent. we now possess is real, not imaginary. Men who have the 30 per cent. upon their standard wages obtain for every pound they earn under normal conditions, 6s. on that pound. Some men have been declaring that

they were better off before they got the 30 per cent than they are to-day. All this is idle talk, mere child's talk, talk of men who don't look at the matter from the point of fact. No doubt some men don't get so much as they used to, because probably they have been guilty of introducing large numbers of men into the mines, thereby sharing the wages instead of earning and receiving what they are fairly entitled to. Now, with regard to competition, it appears that that still goes on merrily. Colliery owners everywhere have this foe to face, day by day. Competition in the sense as I understand it, and as now carried on in the coal trade, is a thing that should be decried by every sensible man, and tolerated no longer than necessity compels. In fact it has got to such a pitch evidently that the South Wales coalowners have made up their minds that they are going to have a different course of action during the year 1897 than they have had in years past. They have a memorandum of agreement now not to dispose of their coal in the way that has been going on for generations. They have decided to limit the output of coal, so far as I understand their scheme, whenever that is necessary. The scheme drafted by Mr. D. A. Thomas, M.P., who is a large colliery owner, is comprehensive in its character so far as South Wales is concerned, and there is no doubt that if the whole of the mining districts of the country would take up that scheme and work it fairly, honestly, and honourably, every colliery owner in the country would be able to work his pits at a profit, a better profit than they are now obtaining, and pay wages to the workmen which might be considered a living wage, and without any friction in the future. With regard to the Federation area, judging from what has taken place in Northumberland, Durham, and South Wales and Scotland, it may safely be said that they are in a better position than those parties outside the Federation area. When we come to think that the collieries laid idle in Durham and Northumberland, and the reasons given, one is drawn to the conclusion that it is not a question of wages that causes no profits, but either a question of management or commercialism connected with the disposal of the coal got and put into the market. Certainly, judging from Durham, where collieries were laid idle, as stated by the men, had they worked for nothing the collieries could not have been made to pay. At the same time a short circular asking for support issued by the Relief Fund connected with Rainton Collieries, belonging to Lord Londonderry, the collieries which made such a great noise and stir at the time they were closed, throws a new light upon the reason why the collieries were stopped. Those issuing the circular declare that there are still 150 men idle, and that they were told at the time the pits stopped that if they would work another hour per day the pits would not stop. This they declined to do, and if Lord Londonderry had done the same as the Haswell owners have done, they would have all been at work now. I am not quoting this with any desire either to in-

crease or decrease the hours of labour in Durham, but for the purpose of shewing that the real reason for stopping the pits evidently was not the cost thereof, if the statement as alleged by that committee is accurate that they could have gone to work had they done so an hour longer per day. With regard to prices and wages, we simply come back to the old position that we, at all events, consider joint action necessary to be taken by all the miners in the United Kingdom, and the closing of pits will be obviated, the regulation of the output of coal in accordance with the South Wales scheme might be possible, and a Living Wage so settled as to remain one of the factors in the trade for all generations.

### ACCIDENTS IN MINES.

I am sorry to say, gentlemen that during the past year many brave fellows have been hurried out of time into eternity, some in large numbers, and some in smaller numbers. The fact yet remains that your trade is a dangerous trade. Risks are run day by day, a man may go down a mine in the morning alive and well, but before the day is over he may be brought home either terribly injured or killed. We yet have at least a thousand persons killed year by year, and there is no doubt but the figures given some time ago all tended to shew that some 250,000 or 300,000 persons are injured slightly or seriously during the year. The reason why, we all know, so few are reported as injured is because the law only instructs managers to report serious injury. I am not now going into details of the great explosions that have taken place at Mickfield and other places in England, and those which have occurred in France and Belgium, and in Austria and Germany. At the same time I point out those matters because every effort, every energy should be used to get Bills passed into law which will give the workman more protection and more safeguard his interests above and below ground, than he has at the present time. Everyone will see the necessity of vigilance and care and pushing energy in calling upon the Governments of the various countries to see to it that the men in the dangerous occupations have such Measures passed into law as will make the men feel that when they go to work they are cared for, and so far as human care, skill and humanity go, they are as safe as it is possible to be under any condition.

### THE WORK OF THE WEEK.

The work of the week, so far as I understand it, is a large one. We have a point to decide as to whether or not we are to work under a new law of Socialism instead of the old principles of Trades Unionism. It is not for me to determine here what Socialism is or what Trade Unionism is. In my judgment, however, the platform of Trade Unionism is a progressive one, and all loyal Trade Unionists will find sufficient room on that

platform to seek to bring about better conditions for the worker in all trades, but more especially in our own trade. I might put it that Trades Unionism is as expansive as the times, and is an applier, practically, and a seeker for all reforms for the good of the people. Now, another question which is brought before you is to deal with the instruments of wealth owned and controlled by the State. Now, in my judgment this is an enormous question, and will probably lead to more mischief if ever attained than exists now under the old monopolies. Let our workers fight the monopolists on the floor of the House of Commons, let our workers unite together with the object of sending men to the House of Commons to carry out their wishes and their views. If that were done evolution would take place within the next five years of such a character as would revolutionise the present condition of things. Another question to be brought before you is that as to the power of the committee to prevent or otherwise irrelevant business being put upon the agenda paper of the Annual Conference. In my judgment since the commencement of this Federation until this year the Committee has dealt wisely with all resolutions that have been sent to it for business or otherwise to be dealt with at the Annual Conference. I am yet of opinion that the Committee for the time being should have absolute power of dealing with all questions to be placed upon the agenda paper for the Annual Conference. Another matter of great importance is that of how best to deal with bringing those districts up to the level of the majority in the Federation with regard to per centage during the coming year. Well, this is a question which should be carefully dealt with. We never pledged ourselves at any time that if a district joined the Federation it should have exceptional treatment. When they joined the Federation it was taken for granted they joined it loyally, and that they joined it with the object of trying to make it a success, and not from selfish motives to be pulled up to the same level as those who have been in it from the commencement. At the same time I am perfectly willing if any reasonable scheme can be suggested to assist those districts to obtain an equal percentage to the average per centage at the earliest possible date. I am also of opinion that we should be very careful how such scheme should be adopted and carried out, so that the trade which is now improving should not be thrown back, and the hopes engendered at the present moment frustrated by any injurious action suggested to be taken by the Annual Conference. With regard to the question of alteration of rules, I am decidedly against any alteration of rules, and trust that these suggestions which have been sent in will not be allowed. This embraces the separating of Counties and Federations into districts and lowering the per centage in districts with regard to obtaining support if allowed to strike, or when locked out on any matter of wages. Let me say in conclusion that I think under all the circumstances we have had a very fair year—we have been free from great strikes

and troubles—and that I hope in the year 1897 better trade will supervene, higher wages be obtained, and the conditions of the lot of the miners will be ameliorated, and that we shall find ourselves in happier conditions throughout the year than we have been in any year since 1893. I wish you one and all, gentlemen, A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Mr. B. DEAN (Midland Federation): I rise to propose that the best vote of thanks be given to Mr. Pickard for his able address, and I do so with the greatest possible pleasure. I may not be so eloquent as some of my brethren in this Conference, but I do it heartily and I do it because I like plain speaking. There has not been a line or a sentence in that speech that a child could not read, and I am certain any individual man could read it if he were willing. Now we have been lectured—in fact we can scarcely stir up and down the street or ride in a railway carriage, or meet with friends anywhere, but what we are lectured—and advised to be conciliatory and very good. Now we believe in that, and Mr. Pickard's speech has been very conciliatory indeed. Mr. Pickard is a conciliation man himself. I know he is looked upon as a great fighter, but if he stands higher in the estimation of his friends in one respect more than another, it is for his conciliation. We have felt the benefit of it this last year. We know how successful he has been, but I am going to say this, that he would not have been so successful as a conciliator if those he had been conciliating with had not known he could fight. That is the secret of his success, and we believe that Mr. Pickard has not only given us good advice this morning, but has given us good advice from the commencement of this movement up to the present, and we believe that he deserves the confidence and the thanks of this Federation for the good he has done them, and for the manner in which he has led them and advised them in the past. I sincerely and heartily propose that the best thanks of this Conference be given to Mr. Pickard for his address this morning.

Mr. J. TOYN (Cleveland): Mr. Chairman and Fellow Workers,—I have very great pleasure indeed in seconding the proposition. Very often people don't say what they think about a man until he is dead and can't hear them. Our friend Mr. Pickard, however, has had so much heaped upon him that I don't think he will care for praise, nor be very much put about if he is cursed. However, his speech this morning has been very carefully thought out, and he has not been afraid to say what he thinks. One name mentioned in that speech—the name of Mr. MacDonald—brings back to my mind old memories. I remember being at a meeting, and I think Mr. Pickard was present, in the Great Northern Hotel, Leeds, 15 or 16 years ago perhaps, and Mr. MacDonald said "I shall soon go from you." To tell the truth, there was a little bit of a scrimmage between our late