

Mr. PICKARD then asked Mr. S. Woods, M.P., to read his annual address. Mr. Woods read the address as follows:—

## HITHERTO.

GENTLEMEN,

In the year 1887, in most of the mining districts, low wages and starvation both in regard to food and clothing ruled. As I proceeded from one mining village to another, and saw the destitution and impoverished condition of the people, with the children going about bare-footed and bare-legged up and down the little streets, I came to the conclusion that better things should be the lot of the mining population. The more villages I entered and the more information I obtained, confirmed me in the determination to rouse the people, not merely in Yorkshire, but throughout the country, to a sense of their obligation and responsibility in this matter. I attended meetings in almost every County, and I found the men fairly cheerful, but their haggard faces and their thin raiment convinced me that they were almost on their last legs, so far as clothing went, let alone the emaciation which had set in in regard to their bodies. When I sought for information in regard to the numbers in the Unions I was perfectly staggered, and although I had made the determination to do my level best to win for the workers better conditions and fairer wages, I was almost disheartened. It was something like the old Scriptural saying, "What are these among so

many?" The few Union men existing at that time, although good men and true, did not appear to me to be a nucleus sufficiently strong to demand what was right and fair to the workmen. At the same time looking at desperate cases in years gone by, and at the desperate efforts made to do and to dare, I was firmly convinced that in this case, at any rate, neck or nothing, something must be done. A great effort was made in many counties, not only to re-build the Association, but without waiting for that consummation to ask for higher wages. Everyone seemed to think that an attempt should be made, even if it led to a worse condition of things than then existed. Everywhere the cry went forth, "We believe we are entitled to an advance of wages." My colleagues in Yorkshire, after consultation, agreed that we should make a bold effort to do something, whether we won or we lost, in seeking to do the right. No one denied that the miner was in a poor way, no one contended that wages were too high, and no one had the hardihood to say that the men were not entitled to ask for more than they received, but a sort of sympathy, cold, cruel, calculating, was manifested, and as soon as any demand was formulated, political economy, so called, was banged in our faces, and it was declared that the coal trade prices would not bear any further burden—there was no profits in the books, therefore there could be no higher wages paid. Now whilst this was stated to be the fact by a large number of employers, there were other employers who made the statement that the reason why an advance could not be given was that the colliery owners were underselling each other to such an extent that, instead of paying the higher wages, the profits went into the hands of the middlemen, the railway and gas companies, and steel and iron companies. It was also stated at this time that manufacturers did not even pay the cost price for the coal and slack they were consuming. There is no doubt this was the fact. Coal delivered to the manufacturers at 2s. 6d., 3s. 6d., and 4s. per ton, would not cover the cost of producing such fuel—hence the remark was made that the profits of the colliery owners went up the chimneys of the manufacturers. Other owners stated that, although they had no money in their books to give to the workmen, they were quite helpless—they could not help themselves in the matter owing to being tied down by keen competition; and that if there was ever to be any betterment for the workers, the workers would have to do it for the colliery owners. Hence the cry went forth, "Whether the colliery owner has got profit or money in the books to give to the workmen or not, the advance will be asked for on a certain date, and whether you have got it in the books or not, we will make you get it from the general public." The general public declared that they were prepared to pay a higher price for their coal in order that the workman should have the

better means of living. A few skirmishes took place in 1887 and 1888, namely, in Bristol, Somerset, and other places. Afterwards, in consequence of the necessity of united action, it was agreed to meet and talk over the matter, with a view to formulate the demands just hinted at. It is a well known fact that these demands were made for an advance of wages, and with a good deal of hesitation and much friction advances were conceded until 40 per cent. was obtained in many large and small counties. A few of the counties that were not connected with the Federation at its establishment did not obtain the full 40 per cent., but Lancashire, Yorkshire, most of North and South Stafford, if not the whole of South Stafford, obtained the full 40 per cent. This question of Wages has been the most fruitful and the most successful question that the Federation has had to deal with. In the endeavour to obtain the 40 per cent. much anxiety, work, and worry was entailed on all those who took an active part in the movement, and where the men were not organised at the commencement they began to see the necessity of organisation, hence earnest efforts were made to induce men to join the societies in the various districts connected with the Federation. Yorkshire went up to somewhere a little over 50,000 members; Lancashire went up to between 30,000 and 40,000, and other districts in proportion, until the vast army was aggregated to carry on the work of the Federation.

I have been your President from the commencement, and this, as you know, has entailed a great deal of work on myself, and much worry and anxiety. I have done the work to the best of my ability, and with the desire to cause the Federation to be, not a byword but a word to conjure with in order to obtain and retain everything valuable connected with wages. With regard to wages as they now exist, it may fairly be said that no body of men outside the Federation enjoy so much and under such valuable conditions. For the first time in the history of mining the Living Wage has been fought for and debated, both within and without the ranks of the Federation, to such an extent as was never known in the history of Trade Unions. When I as your President took upon myself to advocate a living wage, and stated that it was possible to obtain one through the minimum rate of wages, I was sneered at, scoffed at, and told that it never could be done—that it was impossible, because the men were not alike in intellect and in physical ability and capacity, and it was said that the colliery owners and the employers of labour would never consent to any such condition. Our friends in the North, and some of the leading Trade Unionists in London, told us that in fighting for that we should be knocked into a cocked hat. In the year 1893 the colliery owners demanded 25 per cent reduction from the gross earnings of the workers.

They asked for a meeting with your representatives, and we met them—that is the Board as it then existed, and we informed the owners that we could not agree to any such reduction. We also pointed out that it was an understanding arrived at when the last of the 40 per cent. was placed on wages that before any alteration either of an upward or downward tendency was sought for, there should be a meeting called to consider the same before any notices were tendered which demanded either an increase or reduction. We were told then that the owners would have the reduction, and that they could not allow more than a fortnight for it. I simply told them they might just as well call for the man in the moon as get a reduction on miners' wages within a fortnight, or even a longer period than that. There is no need to rehearse what took place, except to say that the owners gave notices, and the battle raged from 16 to 19 weeks, and the workmen returned to work on the old rate of wages. This, as I may remind you, was brought about at the Conference between the employers and workmen's representatives under the chairmanship of Lord Rosebery. When that arrangement was entered into to return to work at the old rate, another agreement was come to, namely, to commence a Board of Conciliation under an independent chairman. That Board of Conciliation was arranged, and was to remain in existence two years. As you know, the rate of wages continued until July, 1896, and after that period, if the owners sought for any alteration in wages, it would be open for them to do so. My colleagues and 300,000 or 400,000 people know that the owners sought for and obtained by mutual arrangement a ten per cent. reduction in wages, on a scheme that should continue for two years, viz., until 1st July, 1896. An attempt was made at the end of that period to continue the scheme under the Board of Conciliation, but it failed. I ought to say here, before leaving the 1894-96 arrangements, that although Lord Shand was considered to be the chairman to assist in arriving at a settlement, or to be called in where any difficulty occurred, I am pleased to say that during the whole of that period no occasion arose for calling in the independent chairman. I think that proves conclusively that it is quite possible for a Board to exist, even with an independent chairman to be called in if necessary, without the actual intervention of such an independent chairman.

In the 1894-96 scheme we, on your behalf, claimed that the 30 per cent. on the rate of 1888 should be the minimum living wage. The owners demurred to this, but during the running of the scheme, and close upon two years, they never sought to interfere with that minimum rate of wages, and, with rare exceptions, that minimum rate of wages has been continued until this day. Since the termination of that scheme an inter-

val occurred of two years without any scheme whatever, but that has not, in any degree so far as I know, caused any bad feeling in the Federation area, with the exception of indirect reductions of wages where the men have left the Union. I may say roughly, that wherever reductions have taken place in an indirect way, it has been because the men at these particular collieries and in those districts have not been united as they should have been; and therefore for want of union and union effort, wages have to some extent gone down. During 1898 a strong desire was manifested to ask for 10 per cent. advance in wages. At the Conference held in Birmingham it was decided to promulgate an agitation for an advance in wages, but I may simply say for myself and colleagues that at that time we did not see how it could be successfully brought about. In fact, things were in that condition that we were afraid a great deal more harm than good would be done by agitating for an advance. Later on a movement was set on foot which was successful, and which brought together the owners and the workmen in a joint meeting to discuss the whole question. The question was debated at length, and I as your President laid your case before the owners, and so far as I know, I did it to the best of my ability. The owners, after some considerable time, refused to give an advance in wages, asserting that whatever trade might be, the prices would not permit it without rendering themselves liable to a further loss. Three Conferences, I think, have been held. I was at two of them, but I am sorry to say I was not permitted to be at the final one, when it was duly ratified that the workmen have two and a half per cent. advance, and that subsequently the matter might be dealt with by the Joint Board. This Joint Board was agreed upon at the Westminster Palace Hotel at the time when the advance wages was conceded. The advance was to commence in October, and continue so long as either side refrained from seeking any alteration. It is open, as you are well aware, for either side to ask for an alteration between the 30 per cent. minimum advance and the 45 per cent. maximum. All disputed points must be dealt with by the Chairman-umpire, who is the Right Hon. Lord James of Hereford. It is not for me to say anything about Lord James, except that in my judgment he is about one of the best Chairman Umpires that could have been selected; and I only hope that, as in the case of Lord Shand, there will not be any need for him to be called to settle any points which cannot be settled by the representatives of the owners and the workmen.

#### LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN.

Now this brings me to the point that one of the most successful campaigns commenced in the 19th century has been ended, viz., that of fighting

## FELT WANT.

Then in regard to meeting a felt want, everything has been done for many years now to get all information possible from the mining communities on the Continent. We were constantly taunted by employers of labour that our inordinate demands for advances in wages were driving the trade from the country. Higher prices for getting coal could not be paid in this country because of the low wages obtaining on the Continent. Now, if there has been one illusion dispelled more than another this is the one, viz., that higher wages could not be paid on account of foreign competition as seen on the Continent. When the first Congress was held at Jolimont, in Belgium, many of our practical miners went down the mines there, and found that the work done to secure a ton of coal practically made it impossible for Belgian colliery owners to compete with the English coal. Since then the Blue Books have stated definitely and clearly that it cost from 2s. to 2s. 6d. per ton more in Belgium and in France to place a ton of coal on the market than it does in England. It is a well-known fact that we can take coal into France, and place it on the markets much cheaper than French coal can be put on similar markets. Hence they have been seeking to put on tariffs to prevent English coal getting into their markets. It is clear, therefore, that if it costs 2s. 6d. per ton more to place a ton of coal in the trucks on the continent than it does here, there is no possibility of that coal being taken into the market to supersede the coal raised in the British Isles. If that was not sufficient to convince outsiders and traders the very fact that the English coal is of such a better quality, which it is admitted on all hands to be, would be one factor in determining the point. By way of seeking to improve the condition of miners on the continent, so far as wages are concerned, there have been nine International Congresses. Some have been held in Belgium, some in France, two in England, two in Germany, and one in Austria. All these Congresses have been successful in two ways—first, they have brought together different nationalities, and have created a good feeling between the people of those countries. Secondly the racial difficulties have practically disappeared, and instead of bitter and angry feeling, good will and concord prevail. Those two points have opened up the possibility of a future such as never could have been hoped for in the days gone by, and whether the Congresses continue or not those already held have been the means of cementing personal friendships, and in creating a strong desire in all those countries for the betterment of the working classes, and the general amelioration of their condition, not merely in regard to wages, but in regard to social and political life. Therefore if no other good effect had taken place during these few years sufficient has been done to lay the foundation for immense improvement in the future

of the miners. To promote the general good of the Federation, and if possible to bring in all outsiders, Conferences prior to the actual formation of the Federation were held at Newcastle, Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff, Leicester, Scotland, Nottingham, Chester, Derby, Sheffield, Manchester, and I believe a few other places, which I cannot call to mind; but all these conferences had their origin in the determination to better the condition of the worker, and to bring about, if possible, better organisation in the various localities. It is to be hoped that the aims already referred to will form the foundation of the great work to be done in the future, viz., the improvement of the condition of the workers, both above and below ground, and better organisation in the various associations, so as to secure for the miners of the United Kingdom all those rights and privileges to which they can lay claim.

### SOME LEGISLATION OF THE PAST AND FUTURE.

Now besides organisation and wages being part and parcel of the Federation, there is another principle embodied in our objects, viz., that of legislation in regard to matters affecting all those connected with the mining industry. Truck (and the word bears a significant meaning, which I have not time to enter into here) has involved a work not of supererogation, but a work done in and out of season to obtain for the workman just and equal rights after doing his days or week's work in the Mine. Truck meant at one time the miner working from dark to dark, earning from 2s. to 3s. 6d. per day, without any further rights in the money earned. He was bound, was the workman, to take goods in lieu of money, and to take them in such a way as meant serfdom and partial starvation, the man working long hours in the mine, and having scarcely any time at home with his family. Truck with all its evils has been swept away, and the Truck Bill brought in by the Tory Government two years ago had to be watched and fought in order to maintain your rights and privileges in this matter. By carefully watching and pointing out what appeared to be an application to the mining industry of a new Truck Act, we were able to prevent falling into the same condition of things, so far as fining is concerned, as prevailed under the old Act. This was prevented by extracting from the Home Secretary a pledge that a clause should be inserted in the Bill, exempting the mining industry from its operation. This pledge was fulfilled, and a clause was inserted to the effect I have mentioned.

It is well within the knowledge of every man in this room that we fought for Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Bills. The 1887 Act contains many wise provisions, but before we had two years of its operation, we found that the Act needed amendment, and from that day to this Bills seeking to amend the 1887 Act have been introduced from time to time. Through sheer want of sympathy on the part of Governments, and the lack of opportunity, nothing has been done in regard to this matter.

Another measure to which we attach great importance—viz., the Mines Eight Hours Bill—has not been passed into law as yet, although we believe in its importance as strongly as ever, and intend to pursue the agitation until it becomes law. The agitation and the meetings connected with this business have cost the Federation thousands of pounds, and I hope my colleagues and the Federation, having now put their hand to the plough will never look back until they have got to the end of the furrow, and accomplish the work they have set themselves to do. It must be remembered that you have a great work before you considering the political conditions of the present day.

#### THE COMPENSATION BILL.

For many years an Employers Liability Bill has been advocated by almost every district connected with the Miners' Federation; and accordingly since the formation of the Federation everything possible has been done to pass such a Bill as would be a fair Bill, and a Bill that would impose such responsibility on employers of labour as to cause them to make better security against loss of life and injury during the time workpeople were following their occupations. The Act of 1880 soon proved itself to be a failure. The Bill brought in later on by the then Home Secretary, Mr. Matthews, was stubbornly fought, because clause three allowed contracting out of its provisions. Liberals in the House, and Liberals and working men generally outside condemned the third clause, and it was so determinedly opposed that the Government of that day, although strong in fighting power, could not carry it. For some years nothing was done to promote Employers Liability until the Liberal party came into power once more, and Mr. Asquith introduced a Bill which, although it was not approved of in all its clauses, was considered a measure which if carried into law would have been very effective in securing employers liability for workmen injured in their employ. With much opposition that Bill was carried through the House of Commons, but when it went to the House of Lords it was so manipulated that if the Government of the day had accepted it, they would have accepted the principle of contracting out just as it was in the Bill introduced by the Tory Government some few years before. That Bill of Mr. Asquith's was maimed and made impossible to do any good work, simply because the Tory party, being the dominant party in the House of Lords, declined to pass a measure which had been accepted by the House of Commons. Now in regard to employers liability, I am of the same opinion to-day as I have been ever since I understood it to mean the liability of employers of labour in respect to injuries received by workmen from any cause whatever during the time they are at their work, so that the owners should be the persons responsible for the injury, and they should be made to pay not merely in person for criminal neglect, but that in civil cases they should pay compensation to the injured person or to the relatives in case of death. That was the view of the old Miners' Union, as embodied in the speeches of the late Mr. Alexander Macdonald. The latest attempt to come to that ideal was the Compensation Bill of 1897.

Those of you who were familiar with the speeches of Mr. Macdonald will remember that he laid down as the first principle safety to life and limb; second that those who were injured should be paid for the injured limb, and the relatives of those killed should be paid for the loss of life; and third that where there was any criminal neglect on the part of the owner or manager, they should be prosecuted criminally. Now when the Compensation Bill of the present Government was brought in, it was certainly on the lines laid down by Mr Macdonald, viz.: that all persons receiving injuries whether accidental or otherwise should be paid compensation for the same. Ultimately this was departed from, and instead of having compensation pure and simple for all persons in dangerous trades, one of the most litigious measures ever placed on the statute book was put into operation on 1st July, 1893. Most of us know that the compensation for injuries was a political trick in the year 1895, along with the other tricks of free houses, old age pensions, and weekly allowance to workmen when ill or off work. Now compensation for injury, if it be made definite and clear that it does not affect criminal responsibility where it occurs, would not be out of place; but where compensation for injury condones, directly or indirectly, wrong doing, and increases the death-rate it will be a great scourge in the dangerous trades. It is said the reason why the present Government brought in a Bill under the title of Compensation for Injuries, instead of Employers' Liability, was because of the failure of other Governments to pass Employers' Liability Bills into law. Others said that it was to tickle the political fancy of the electors into the belief that the Tory party were the best friends of the workers; while others believed that a few politicians were seeking notoriety by offering doles to the workers for political purposes. Whether this was so or not, as a matter of fact, what was dangled before the constituencies in 1895 has not been realised in any Act of Parliament from that date until now. As I have said, when the Bill was brought in it appeared to be a wide and generous measure. The only complaint against the Bill was on the part of the employers, because (said they) you are creating a compensation law without compensating the law with a fund to bear the burden of that compensation. Said they—We don't think it fair that compensation for all accidents that occur should be paid for by employers of labour; said they—We can prove that a large percentage of accidents will occur however we provide material for the safe working of the works; said they—We think the employers should pay one part, the workmen another part, and the royalty owners another part. From this position the owners have never receded. Therefore you will see at once that this met what the late Mr. Macdonald suggested, and which was inserted in the Bill as first introduced, that all injured persons should be paid compensation; and that the relatives of those who lost their lives should be paid from £150 and upwards. Consequently, you and I have only one deduction to draw from the Bill as first introduced—that it was wide in its scope and application to the workers of the country. The other objectors were those omitted from the scope of the measure. The Bill brought within its scope somewhere near seven millions of the people working in different trades, while somewhere near seven millions were also left out. Naturally those left out in the

could considered that if there was any good in the measure they also should be brought within it. From that day till now these two classes of objectors hold the same opinion : therefore in regard to the employers of labour, and the workmen left out of the Bill, their objections have not abated, so far as I know, one jot or tittle. You and I believe that all workers should come under this Bill ; that employers of labour everywhere should be put on an equality, and there is doubt the agitation will go on until a different state of things is brought about, and the workers in all trades and avocations shall come within the purview of the law dealing with compensation. When this Bill was originally introduced, it was made clear, so far as language could make it clear by the Secretary of the Colonies and the Home Secretary, that the measure would not be a lawyer's Bill but a worker's Bill ; there would be no litigation ; the miner who received an injury would get so much per week, and the relatives of the man who was killed would receive an adequate sum of money. Later on, the Bill was transformed, and during the first six months of the operation of the Act it has proved itself to be one of the most contentious and one of the most fruitful in litigation, and one of the most harmful in creating bad feeling of any Bill put on the statute book during this generation. Under it conditions have arisen which no human being could have foreseen.

### ALLEGED DETECTIVE WORK.

The very fact that professional gentlemen have been appointed under indemnity funds and syndicates to act as detectives, as is alleged, is simply abominable. I say there is nothing in the Act empowering any such bodies having such positions. Allegations are made that professional men act in this capacity. If it is true that as is alleged in more than one case that such gentlemen have actually demanded men to strip naked where a man has had a broken arm, and others have seen injured men without examination, and told the man he was able to work, while the man had a hole in his back, and could not possibly work, yet that man's pay was stopped ; and further, when even the managers have written urging the pay to be continued, it is quite clear these bodies are certainly thorough detectives, acting in my opinion, contrary to the Act. These bodies are certainly taking upon themselves powers unauthorised by the Act of 1897. Who would imagine that officers of such bodies would assume as great if not greater, powers than the County Court Judges. As a matter of fact, some owners declare the thing is intolerable, and as soon as they can get out of their present entanglement they will do so at once, and act directly with their work-people. As a Federation we accepted the Bill, because we believed it to be a fair Bill so far as it went. In the form it was introduced we considered it was a fair Bill, and intended to meet the rightful claims of the workers. We accepted the Bill with all its defects, and hoped that it would be the foundation of a wider and more generous Measure being placed on the statute book in the future. Now that the question of litigation has been settled, and it is felt that it is a lawyers', and not a workmen's Bill, we come to the point

whether we should press for amendments at the earliest possible moment seeing that the measure has worked out so contrary to the wishes of those who conceived the original Bill. I have no hesitation in saying that the Compensation Bill is a litigious Bill.

### SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS.

As I and others suggested, the Bill could be worked out at every colliery with a small local Committee of employers, managers, and workmen. We suggested during the passage of the Bill that committees should be formed to deal with the cases, but the Secretary to the Colonies replied that he would have nothing to do with any such suggestion. I have no doubt that since then he has altered his mind, and would, if possible, effect what it was intended should be done, viz, that the lawyers should have nothing to do with it. Now, it comes to this, when a man charges twenty guineas for his work as a doctor, and another in giving evidence charges ten guineas, that is thirty guineas in one case, then what the lawyer's bill would be remains to be seen. I am not here to say that the doctor who charged twenty guineas is not entitled to it, or that the man who charged ten guineas is not entitled to it, but all these facts prove that it is an expensive and a litigious measure. Therefore I declare that at every colliery in the United Kingdom small committees could deal with these matters, if the Act had been similar to the provisions originally introduced into the House of Commons. Then, I consider that all cases of injury should be paid from the first day on receipt of the medical certificate that the man was injured. I was surprised on this point by a remark made at the Bristol Conference, which I did not hear, but of which Mr. Parrott informed me, that one man had actually got by County Court decision the whole of the fortnight, on the ground that he was injured and off work more than a fortnight. Therefore, if the present law will bear that construction, there is no reason why men should not be paid for the full time if they apply beyond the fortnight. As a matter of fact, in French law the men are paid from the time they are off work four days. Then in regard to deaths, in my judgment the death money should be paid on the production of a marriage certificate, and of the death certificate. Why should the wife be bound not merely to get a death certificate and a marriage certificate, but also an affidavit that she had only been married once, and that she was the legal wife of the deceased man. All this has to be gone through now; why should it be so? There might easily be a clause inserted that wherever any person received any money under false pretences they should be prosecuted under the Act dealing with the same. No litigation evidently is substituted for the law of Nature—that is, a man-made law, and those who deal with it appear to have more power and more assy than those poor people who deserve, not insu't adding to injury, but the payment made to them at the earliest opportunity for the loss of the bread winner and the support of those dependent upon him. As I have already indicated, if the law was that the person injured and the relatives of persons killed should be paid there would be no litigation under the Local Committees suggested. If ever a disputed case

arose, those working at the place, whether managers or managed, would know more about the facts of the case than arbitrators or any legal gentleman appointed to deal with the matter, because as a matter of fact when they deal with it the information has to be supplied by the very men who might settle it without going into any such Courts as provided for in the present Acts. Therefore I sum up in as few words as possible—After the working of the Act for six months that it is almost an unworkable Act; that persons other than those directly interested have great power under the Act: hence I say we should go in for an Amending Act, and make the conditions so easy and simple that it would be possible for arrangements to be made to carry out its provisions much more simply and effectively than under the present Act. I think you will all agree with me that as things have gone up to now neither Colliery Owners and other Employers of Labour nor the Workmen have much respect for an Act which deals out indiscriminately such blows at the workmen as this one does, and the sooner we get out of the intricacies of the present law the better for those who have to deal with cases of injury and of death under the present condition of the law.

### CONCILIATION AND THE WORK OF THE NEW BOARD.

In regard to the work connected with the Wage Question on the new Board that remains for this and other Conferences to deal with. I can only say that the volume of trade is shown by the following figures:—In 1888, the output of coal was 169,935,219 tons; in 1897 it was 202,119,196 tons, or an increase in the ten years of 32,173,977 tons. Thus practically the output in the United Kingdom was more than a third more than in 1888, before and at the time the wage question was seriously tackled by those connected with the Federation—thus bearing out our contention that unless the volume of trade is to be the principal factor on which to base our wage rate, then an increased rate of output is the greatest evil that can come to any trade, and especially the coal trade, if it means sacrificing the employers' capital and the workmen's wages to other trades for them to realise fortunes while low wages and no profits come to be the order of the day in one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. With respect to the selling price, both in the home and foreign markets, statements have been made, and the reports of colliery owners' meetings clearly indicate that it has a general upward tendency, and so far as the reports which have appeared in the daily papers are concerned, they show what that upward tendency is.

The following is an extract from one of the papers, and is a clear index of what is likely to occur during 1899. The extract speaks for itself:—

#### PROSPECTS FOR THE YEAR.

“Judging from the present appearance of trade and industry generally, it seems in every way probable that the demand for all classes of coal next year will be exceedingly good, and that fair prices, at least, will be obtained without much difficulty. Indeed, the contracts that have already been closed leave no doubt

that in every case the sellers have been able to secure a substantial advance, ranging usually from sixpence to a shilling a ton, according to the quality of the coal, upon the previous year's rates. For instance, extensive gas-coal contracts have been concluded at 8s. to 8s. 6d. a ton, bunker coals at 7s. 6d. to 8s. 3d. a ton, steam coals at 9s. a ton, and manufacturing coals at 1s. to 1s. 6d. advance. The North Eastern Railway Company's contracts, which are usually a very safe index of the state of the market, since the company is a large and usually a very keen buyer, were closed a few days ago at prices averaging 9s. a ton delivered into trucks, or 9d. a ton advance upon the prices paid for 1898 delivery. Stocks of coal both at home and abroad are comparatively low, a good deal of business having, no doubt, been checked by the high freights which have ruled throughout the year. With trade activity everywhere apparent, it is only reasonable to suppose that there will be a full demand all over the world for coal; but there is just a fear that the high freights of this year may continue to rule over next year, and to a district like the North of England cheap freights are an essential to successful competition. It is probable, however, that these high freights will only be temporary, and that as time goes on we shall see a gradual return to something approaching normal figures. In view of the general strength of the market and these high freights there is at the close of the year a disposition on the part of many large merchants to hold back their contracts in the hope that they will be able to buy cheaper during February or March. The policy is regarded by coalowners as a doubtful one. These months, it is true, are usually quiet, the gas companies and other large consumers reducing their stocks in view of the coming summer, while Baltic shipments have not begun for the season. No falling off in prices, therefore, is likely to be experienced in February and March, for with April and May there is invariably an expansion in shipments and a good demand for all classes of coal. But the fall, if it should come, does not promise to be serious or of any long duration. Generally speaking, the prospects for the year are, therefore, very satisfactory, and it only remains for employers and their workmen to pull together so as to avoid strikes and trade dislocations, and mutually participate in the good times in which they now find themselves. But after the object lesson furnished by the great Welsh strike there is probably very little fear of trouble on that score."

The following, from the Board of Trade returns, also shows the prices existing in regard to the exportation of coal, coke, and cinders. In 1888 the tons exported were 26,970,536, and in 1897 there were exported 37,096,918 tons, thus shewing an increase of tons exported to foreign countries of upwards of 10 millions tons. The values in 1888 were £11,345,299, and in 1897 £16,654,955 in the aggregate and per ton as declared to the Government in 1888 at 8.41, and in 1897 at 8.98.

The following figures will give some idea of the value of exports during part of this year as compared with other years.

Average Export Prices for 1898, first Eight Months, and 1896, and  
other dates.

|                                       |     | s.    | d.              |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-------|-----------------|
| 1898, Average Price, Eight Months ... | ... | 10    | 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ |
| 1896, „ Year ...                      | ... | 8     | 9               |
|                                       |     | _____ |                 |
| Increase over 1896 ...                | ... | 1     | 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ |
|                                       |     |       |                 |
| Average in 1894 ...                   | ... | 10    | 6               |
| „ 1898 (eight months) ...             | ... | 10    | 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ |
|                                       |     | _____ |                 |
| Decrease on 1894 ...                  | ... | 0     | 0 $\frac{1}{4}$ |
|                                       |     |       |                 |
| Average in 1893 ...                   | ... | 9     | 10              |
| „ 1898 (eight months) ...             | ... | 10    | 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ |
|                                       |     | _____ |                 |
| Average Increase ...                  | ... | 0     | 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ |

Thus it may be noted that whatever values may be found in the home trade values, the export values have not lost tone during the years referred to, namely, 1893, 1894, 1896, and 1898.

### FEDERATION OF TRADES.

With regard to the Federation of Trades, I was not a little surprised to find that this had been dealt with at a committee meeting. Without attempting to find fault with what was done, it was clearly outside the province of the committee to pass a resolution in the form it did, especially when it should have been remembered that the resolution was agreed to at a Miners' Conference, held at the Stork Hotel, Birmingham, on September 4th, 1897, and particularly when each delegate was expected to come prepared to deal with this important matter. No. 10 resolution of that Conference report reads as follows—"That we oppose the resolution on the Federation of Trades." That resolution was, according to custom, endorsed at the yearly meeting. In fact the Federation has been opposed to the Federation of Trades all along on the ground that until the miners were themselves federated it would be practically useless to join any other trade when such large numbers were outside our own Unions. I have already remarked more than once that, there would not be so much harm in federating with cognate trades if these trades were a compact body in the United Kingdom, prepared not merely to defend, but attack, on behalf of every trade with whom we became federated. As we know, Federation means cost, as alleged in a recent reference case, not merely in management, but in every other matter affecting the vital interests of the workers. Unless this is the case, even Federation would be of no avail. Indiscriminate strikes and lock-outs would be the most severe tax that Trades Unionists could be subject to, and before any such line of action is entered on, there should be almost perfect unity in every

district, and in every trade so federated. Without this condition, federation would be a bye-word, and not a word such as we in this Federation understand its meaning and application.

### SOUTH WALES

During the past six months an agitation has been going on in South Wales for the formation of a Trade Union pure and simple. The information I have to hand is that such a Trade Union is formed, and that large bodies of workmen have joined it; and I am also informed that there is a great desire on the part of the leaders in South Wales, and the majority of the men, to join that Trade Union to the Federation of Great Britain. You are aware that certain communications passed between myself and some of the leaders; also communications passed between the Secretary of the Federation and the leaders in South Wales, which resulted in a deputation attending a meeting of the Federation, wanting to know on what conditions the South Wales Trade Union could join the Federation. According to the minutes of the meeting a *modus vivendi* was found to bring them into the Federation. Since then I have had communications which lead me to believe that an application will be made on 10th January, to join the Federation, and that leads me to the conclusion that if South Wales applies, and is accepted, it would be a very important step towards the federation of the miners of England, Scotland, and Wales. I can only hope that this may be brought about, and that loyalty will prove in the future strong enough to keep the body politic together as one united body, not merely for one or two years, but for the next generation.

### POLITICS.

At the present moment one of the great parties in the State appears to be in a sad condition. If newspaper reports are to be accepted, the party alluded to is broken up, it is without a leader, with no head to direct, and no body to work. Now that the crisis has come, it is quite clear that the Mining population must take a new departure, and must demand attention from this new body which, phoenix-like, will, no doubt, rise out of its ashes, a more powerful party than ever was known in this country, not merely to initiate, but to accomplish great and good work.

The Mining population have several questions which have been hanging on for settlement for years. There is the Eight Hours' question, the Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Bill, several reforms required in regard to the law relating to registration, the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords, and many smaller things to be remedied alike in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. This Federation must, in my judgment, take upon itself to insist that in future, unless the Liberal Party declare in favour of reform for bettering the condition of the workers generally, support cannot be given to any party in the State refusing to make themselves the representatives of the workers on different lines to those which have been acted upon up to the end of 1898. If we are to have new leaders—and I

claim to be yet a loyal supporter of the Liberal party, while also claiming to be a consistent representative of the Labour party—then in this matter I won't give myself away to any man who seeks to represent the Labour cause. I have come to the conclusion, as the result of my experience in the present Parliament, that the workers of the country have been dangled for, petted, and caressed until the elections were over, and that then their interests were relegated to the last month of the last session in any particular Parliament. The time has now come when we as workers must declare that our interests must be looked after equally with those who sit in high places, and receive emoluments of office, and who take year by year unearned increment, and never say, "Thank you" for the same.

We as miners want work done—We don't want pledges nor promises made to be broken. Had it not been for the Whigs and weak kneed Liberals in the House of Commons, the Mines Eight Hours Bill would have passed through it, and been sent up to the House of Lords. Sir Wm. Harcourt is now out of the running; therefore, whatever he could do, and would have done had the Liberal party supported him, we must demand from his successors pledges that they will pass such measures into law when the Liberal Party comes into power. If the Tory Party will pass the Bill we will accept it thankfully from them, but as they have refused to allow even a debate to take place on the Eight Hours Bill during the last two Sessions, I anticipate no real good from that particular section of political parties in this country. Whatever may be the faults and failings of the Liberal Party, they have made great attempts to do good, and to benefit the mining population of the United Kingdom. Their Bill of 1872 was a great improvement on mining legislation; their Act of 1871, in regard to Trades Unions, was the Magna Charta of all workers in this Island, and we are just now finding out that while the Liberal Party gave us that Act, every indication shews a backward tendency under the present regime. The law of conspiracy, the law of picketing is evidently, so far as the workmen are concerned, in a bad way. Therefore, whatever party we may believe in, and whatever action we desire them to take, we must know of a surety that the party we support will pledge themselves to carry into law what is known and expressed as the great wants of the mining population of this country. We talk about wars and rumours of wars; we talk about men being killed here and men being killed there; but when we come to think of the death rate connected with mining, one is startled indeed. In the short space of nine years upwards of 8,000 brave, stalwart workers left their homes in good health, and probably highly contented in mind, and the majority of these were taken home dead as the result of casualties at their work. When we remember the large number who receive injuries every year, added to the number of those who lose their lives, one comes to believe that our mines are real abattoirs, where the miner is butchered from day to day; and these facts lead one to the conclusion that steps should be taken to prevent these sad occurrences year by year. Just imagine that in the course of nine years upwards of 8,000 men have been swept away—a larger number than the population of many of our villages; and let it be remembered that these numbers apply solely to the Federation area,

with South Wales included. In the wider death rate there are over 1,000 lives lost every year; therefore can it be wondered at that the worker in every mining village and every county begs and prays the Government to pass measures into law for protection against death and serious injuries in the pits? These facts, which I place before you with regard to this matter, you must consider and do your best to act upon in the future. I am giving you a few tables which will shew you the number of persons employed in the Federation area, including South Wales, in 1888 and 1897. In 1888 in the Federation area there were upwards of 340,000 persons employed underground; in 1897 there were upwards of 440,000, being an increase of 100,000. In the Federation area during the same period, and including South Wales, the output of coal was in 1888 upwards of 132,000,000 tons; in 1897 it was upwards of 153,000,000, or an increased output of 26,000,000 tons. Hence it is seen how vastly the coal trade has developed within the area named within the dates given. During this week we shall enter on one of the most important Conferences that has been held for some considerable time, and it behoves every delegate present to set to work with the will and the desire to make it one of the most successful conferences that has ever been held. The reports to be taken on the Compensation Act, and the discussion on the question of wages arising from the proposal to ask for a further advance of 7½ per cent., will no doubt take up much time, and may bring on warm words, which will need to be chilled by common sense, and a due regard for the future of this Federation. Number 6 on the programme, desiring a National Conference to be called of the mining districts, suggests to my mind something which never ought to be tolerated within the pale of the Federation business. This Federation has been going steadily on amidst jeers and gibes since 1888, and has made the most wonderful progress of any Trade Union in the world, and to debate whether or not it cannot attend to its own business is something that I, as one who believes in Federation demur to, and object to praying for one or two outsiders to join us. One would have thought that this Federation had been reviled long enough and often enough without endeavouring to stultify itself in the way and the manner suggested. This Federation has invited all Miners' Associations everywhere to join it, therefore I say it stultifies itself if it allows such a debate to occur at this stage of its history.

### PARLIAMENTARY WORK.

In regard to the Mines Regulation Amendment Act, all I can say is, I thought we had dealt with both the points mentioned more than once in every particular. I have nothing new to add to any remarks I have made on these matters in the past, and I can only hope that we shall be in legislative matters a united body, and that we shall act unitedly on all questions affecting the mining industry. With regard to the Mines Eight Hours Bill, that must be dealt with. The Miners International business becomes more and more serious as we pass along. The old Miners' National Union is now defunct, so far as I understand from the resolution agreed to a short time ago by that body. Other matters very interesting will come before you, and I only hope that the Conference to be held in Edinburgh during this week will be as successful as many other Conferences have been.

This year it is intended to give along with the report of the Conference, the portraits of the sub or Parliamentary Committee, also the portraits of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and Mr E. Cowey. You will find attached to these portraits just a few leading points in their lives—when and where they were born, when they entered public life and such like matters. This is done without being invidious to other members, either of the Board or the various Trades Unions.

### CONCLUSION.

And now I come to the end, gentlemen, of retailing the work done and offering a few suggestions for future work, which have occupied me some time along with others. Before I pass a final remark, I wish to point out that you give me instructions to deal with all these matters, specially this year, and also to furnish you with a few tables and a few statistics dealing with mining matters. These will be found, along with the photographs, in an appendix to the report. And what shall I say in conclusion? In one of my addresses I advised you to be loyal, loyal, loyal, as the great safeguard to the continuance of this Federation. Comradeship, hard work, consistency in everything relating to that work, will be the means of continuing this organisation; and I can only hope that every member of the Federation, every official of the Federation, will to the best of his ability maintain its principles, safeguard the rights and privileges acknowledged by law, and thereby conduce to the common good, and to the future success this organisation is destined to be heir to. I therefore wish you one and all a Happy New Year.