
AFTERNOON.

AMERICAN STRIKE.

The CHAIRMAN: There are one or two matters to refer to. For a considerable time there has been a trend of opinion in America and it has been seen for some time there was to be a collision there. Mr. Abrahams told us what he saw there and so far, from what he saw, we shall endorse to-day in more ways than one. This struggle for independence in America is something on the same lines to what we have experienced in this country in the

early days of Trades Unions battles, to fight collectively and not in an isolated way. In America; there was a certain class who had been trying for the last three years to imitate English Trades Unions, and so far as I know, Mr. Mitchell—all praise to his honour—has tried his level best to bring about a different condition of things in America, but now they have used all measures to prevent a stoppage, the stoppage had come. So far as I can learn from the newspapers—I have had no communication with Mr. Mitchell—all his energies are concentrated on the struggle, and the suggestions of outsiders are never welcome, for every man in his own country believes he knows better than all the world besides. When I have made up my mind to take a certain course, if I get supported, I go on with it, if I do not, I then support it. In our big strike in 1893 we were supported not merely in money, but in logic. Somehow or another we never took their advice, we saw the end in view and fought for that end. We were asked, why do you not agree to a reduction? I said, what, 25 per cent. reduction, and we replied, no, we should not do so. You all know we had propositions from Mayors of Yorkshire and the Mayors of Yorkshire would have settled it to their own satisfaction if allowed their own sweet will. The owners did not believe that the Mayors should do so—a good thing for us they did not—if the owners had agreed the thing would have been over very shortly. The owners cannot see beyond their nose ends and they acted in that capacity; some of them are good men, clever and far seeing, and when it comes to making profits, they can see that side well, but we can see the other side much better. We have all our own ideas and principles, and we think we are entitled to our opinions as much as other people. With regard to America, we have reports given to us on a former occasion, that as many as 13 different nationalities were at one meeting and Mr. Mitchell came in after that, and he has drawn the men together in one region, acting on the same lines as we do. When you think what it has been to bring about such a scheme, there must have been a man with one idea left, and in carrying out that idea it landed them into a struggle which has laid the foundation for freedom and Trades Unionism in that country. We are told this morning the men are so obstinate that they have committed acts of insubordination and men have been murdered. The last statement was 23 men had been murdered, it does not say by whom, and we are not going to inquire too closely into that; it is a land of freedom so far as the pistol or knife is concerned, not merely among the miners but throughout every community. The suggestion is, shall I shoot my man, and perhaps afterwards they are sorry for having done so. We find now that the owners are in a corner, they have tried to work the oracle through the local Law Courts, and I was pleased to see that Mr. Mitchell the other day when asked by President Roosevelt to take their case in an isolated way, said NO! That was the right course to take. If it cannot be settled by the great body of men, workmen and owners to have mutual arrangements, I do not think any compulsory business would settle it. The Govern-

ment had taken it up now, and they had had certain persons at the Temporary White House. As you know President Roosevelt is not in a position to knock about, but sat in his easy chair and gave all his communications in that position, but he finally said: "We cannot intervene now." We are told, 49,000 troops are in readiness to be used against the rioters. We should be called here rioters in the same sense in this country; we should have forty or fifty thousand soldiers ready to go against the men, and why turn them upon the men any more than the provokers; if the men were to be turned upon, why don't they send the soldiers to punish those who manage the operations. The reason was as in this country that the powers were always on the side of those who owned the dollars—dollars made out of the bone and sinew of the men—bosses, or as we call them, contractors and managers. When I was in America myself I saw some of them, and I should not like to be under their tender mercies for long together. These men are struggling for unionism, for wages, and for their very lives, and also for freedom to make a contract with the employers without the intervention of the military, which is always an awkward business for any country or population. Therefore I am certain you will agree with me these men are fighting a determined battle in the way they are now, doing and would not allow either the soldiers or the Government to intimidate them, and they should meet with your very earnest support in anything I suggest to-day; we ought to give some decided support. I was pleased that South Wales men took the initiative and have sent the men £1000, and when they put it into dollars it looks a big lump, just the same as when we send any money into Germany, and they put it into pennings. The case is urgent, these men are still fighting, they have no recognised fund; they simply do by contributions and levies what we do systematically week by week, paying 6d. or 4d. or whatever it might be. This is a lesson in America, and even in England, that we ought to have a Central Fund, not for every mining district, but as a Federation. I know people demur at anything like that, but it is the pounds that take care of the pence, in our case it is said the pennies added together make the pounds; but we want the pounds and then dole it out in shillings and coppers. With this great battle in America if they handled it rightly would mean the amalgamation of all trades in one Central Federation, I mean the mining trades. So far as I look at it, if we know anything about trades unionism, that is the meaning of it, one man helping another whatever his nationality may be. You know we have helped Belgium, and Austrians, I don't think we have ever helped the French, we have helped these other people very fairly indeed, and now seeing that they are not foreigners to us, they are Englishmen, Scotchmen and Welshmen located in a far off land; they are in trouble, and everybody is anxious, and whether they win or lose my sympathies have gone out to them. I thought of suggesting something sometime before South Wales, but I was not practical, I did not suggest to our Federation what to do, but I am certain they would have done it if I had

suggested anything definite in this matter, and taking an example from our friends we must now be practical thereon. We must not throw little bits of crusts here and there, and I have to suggest that we make a grant here to-day of £1000 from the funds of the Federation. If we do not do them any good it will touch their hearts with our sympathy, and if they do not join us later on, that will not be our fault. Before the last International Congress, we asked them to send delegates. I had a courteous letter from Mr. Mitchell, almost to this effect. "If we had been out of this struggle we would probably have sent delegates." Looking from that standpoint, it is quite clear we have sown good seed for some good in the future and if we send £1,000 we should be consolidating that feeling. Mr. Abrahams addressed several meetings in the region of the strike and he knows on what lines they are working, whether he does or not it does not matter, if we send this money, although it would not go far, it would show our heartfelt sympathy for our fellow sufferers and the down-trodden. If you can help such men as the Belgians and Austrians, you ought to help the Americans, we ought to subscribe as generously to them as we do to others. I am not going into the question as to whether they want support, they have written to certain people for them to use their influence to get certain things done which he was sorry they did, but you ought on this occasion to say you will be willing to help in the way I suggest.

WINDING ACCIDENTS.

There is another matter which we cannot allow to rest, that is with regard to drawing men out of our pits. In 1887, I pressed upon the Government the necessity of having safety catches to our cages, so that if the rope broke the catch would cling to the conductor and the lives of the men thereby saved. Whatever might be brought about to injure property, I set life and limb far higher than that whether it is a cost of £10 if a life is saved. If that measure had been in operation since 1887, hundreds of lives would have been saved which have been lost in that period. If you remember, we had a serious cage accident at Houghton Main Colliery, and if a safety catch had been on that cage it would have stopped immediately and the lives saved; all told ten men were killed. In South Wales we have had a serious accident, eight lives lost instead of no life, which would have been the case had there been these catches on. Well, these safety catches were pooh-poohed by the managers, who said more damage would have been done with the safety catches than without. I remember for several years working at a colliery where the safety catches were used, no accident occurred, no breaking of ropes, no breaking of conductors, no damage done; these things were called fads. Managers would not have them, they had good enginemen—thank God for that—they are clever men. When we come to remember the heroism shown now and then, we are convinced that no accident

would occur wilfully or negligently. When we come to remember how a man the other day in South Wales stuck to his post and had the skin burned off his hand; I think this is a case where a monument should be raised where a man stands like that and proffers his life, thinking more about the men under his charge than his own life, he is worthy of all praise. We had another case in Lancashire, a man was letting the men down and in a moment was struck dead, but in his death grasp managed to let them down and not a life was lost; I understand they are going to raise a monument to the man. Now when we come to look at this question in a practical way, we must be glad to know that we have a body of enginemen attending to their duties, and these men are not merely clever and know their business, but they have courage, which is better sometimes than all the cleverness they possessed. When you come to look at this business how the Government of the day defy all the energy we possessed in the House of Commons, do not take any notice of the Labour members, after we have persistently tried, day in and day out, we cannot get them to do anything, and these men do not regret that certain things have happened, and the Home Secretary ought to consider himself responsible for all the deaths that have taken place amongst our workmen in our mines, and they positively refuse to assist us in any way whatever in these things. They preferred listening to managers and mining experts, who can always give evidence, evidence to-day if desired on the one side, and to-morrow on the other side.

INSPECTORS AND THEIR DUTIES.

I am afraid our Inspectors are not much good, we do not get much assistance from them, especially with regard to men going up and down the pits; sometimes there are 30 and 32 and nearly 60 going up and down in the cages. We are entirely opposed to this riding men against men; we said that if one rope broke the other would come in collision, and we should have probably the death of 60 persons, whilst an accident in the pit brought it about, and we never get much assistance from Inspectors of Mines on any account except a little advice. When have they tried to put anything into force to bring about more saving of life and limb? It is time that inspectors were inspectors and not clerks and reporters. The inspectors should be supplied with sufficient clerks and assistants to attend to their work, instead of that he had to do all those thousands of miles every year. There ought to be at least seven inspectors in Yorkshire. He knew if it had been left with Lord Cross a great alteration would have been made in the law. There were some amendments proposed in Committee which were more stringent than what we desired; one thing was that they should make anonymous visits to the collieries, and not to let the owners know; but the colliery owners seem to know when the inspectors are coming; they can smell them, and even send their own carriages to meet them,

and what we want is not merely an Inspector of Mines, but an Inspector who has a mind of his own, and who will carry out the law fearlessly, and if the man was at fault punish him, or if the manager was at fault punish him. So far as I look at these matters, safety in mines should be everything, and the inspectors should be poking their noses in everywhere. There are a sufficient number of cases of accidents which could be told to the world, and would get no one into trouble. Men not carrying out their duties according to the act should be exposed.

GAS IN MINES.

There was the question of finding gas in mines. I was surprised when I went into Llest, they knew nothing about it, until it burnt the men's whiskers off. It wants 18 or 20 men to lose their lives before any action is taken. All I can say is, when gas is found, it should be reported, and the men drawn out of the pit. These seemed to be minor matters, but at least in the mining population large numbers of men lost their lives, which would not have happened if proper precautions had been taken. Strong protests should be made. Some electric lamps were worth their weight in gold, but the managers would not have them. If there had been electric lamps where the men were entombed in the Forest of Dean, the men would have been in a position to know what time or day it was, because they were prepared to burn for eight hours, they could have kept it in for ten minutes at a time, but everething was discouraged which would tend to protect the lives of the miners.

INTERNATIONAL MATTERS.

With regard to the International business, you passed a certain resolution that a meeting should be held to consider a Permanent Secretaryship, to have an office in Brussels. We met in Lille; Germany, Austria, France, Belgium and England were there. The idea, wanting a Permanent Secretary paying money all the year round when they were too poor to attend the Committees, but they (Germany) moved the resolution. We told them that we must know what you have to say, we in the Federation have decided to have nothing to do with it, and France and Belgium were in the same position. Germany had their programme and it was a wonderful programme too, they sent me a copy in English and it is rather a "cure" to read. Only Germany were prepared to move and support the scheme, and then we did not know exactly what their scheme would be. Ultimately they wanted us to agree for a Permanent Secretary to come to Barnsley to do his work under me, call all the meetings, when he liked, suggest every scheme adopted at the Congress; that was worse than the original and ultimately we had to tell the Germans, seeing they had no seconder to it, the matter must drop, but we argued three hours to show them because they had no seconder it had to be dropped.

Eventually we agreed to this—If Germany wanted a scheme they must write it out and send it to the Annual Committee Meeting and if the Committee agreed, it should be put on the Agenda for the Annual Congress. The forthcoming French strike was never touched upon but it had appeared in their papers that we had refused to support them and that we had agreed to have a Secretary, but this was not true. In conclusion, there will be opportunities to say something more later on and now I am going to put the question of £1,000 and I can only hope that it will be carried unanimously.