
CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

The CHAIRMAN : Now gentlemen, the least interesting part of this Conference has come, that is, the statement on the agenda, the President's address. First of all I want to welcome the delegates of our Federation to Scarbro', in addition to the welcome, the very hearty welcome given to us without very much ostentation by the Mayor. I want on behalf of the Executive to welcome you to Scarbro' and to express the hope that we may have a most successful Conference here and that all the delegates and those who may have accompanied any of the delegates to this town may have a happy, healthy, and invigorating time. In all conscience at the present time, in the present state of the labour movement, many men who are actively engaged in it, in spite of everything said about labour leaders being loafers fattening on the hard earned pence of the workers, I happen to know being in the inner circle

that from time to time, those who were taking heartily and unselfishly an active part in the labour movement especially in such stirring times through which we have come they require from time to time to get a breath of sea air. I hope that our visit to this town may not only be a business meeting which will be helpful to our membership in this great movement but that it will also be helpful in building up a little bit of the exhausted strength of those taking a leading part in the movement.

MEMBERSHIP.

I want to express my very great pleasure indeed at the progress which our organisation has made this year. Last year we represented 586,000 members. Our membership had gone back a little probably as the outcome of the serious struggle through which we passed. I ventured to express the view at Swansea last year that during the next year, which was then the coming year, that we might be able to add to the membership of the Federation 100,000 members. We have represented to-day an additional membership as compared with last year of 74,500, that probably would be considered to be a big thing for a great labour movement in Great Britain, an extraordinary big membership for one Union, but great as the number that we have on the Credentials to-day, I venture to say that if the real membership was reported and paid for, we should have a membership nearer 800,000 than 700,000 in the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. I do not want to find fault, I do not want to scold, because my own little part of this Federation may be as great a sinner as any other part, but I would say to every district that while it may be fair and honest to keep a few thousands of floating membership that it is the duty of the various Branches to add their full membership or as near as possible on the books of the Central Federation. I know that some districts quarter by quarter go carefully over their books and add additional members but the full membership is not sent on, and I would have been better pleased if we could have been supplied with the actual membership on the books as paying members of this Federation, if that had been so I believe we would have been able to say we had obtained 140,000 new members at this time. There is still room for further progress, this Federation cannot content itself, cannot call itself as really representative of the mining movement as it ought to be until we can place on the books of our Federation another 100,000 underground workers. That is a position which may be called a dream, but it is possible and will be ultimately realised, still we are entitled to congratulate ourselves upon the fact that our movement so far as our membership is concerned is still going forward.

ACCIDENTS.

We can congratulate ourselves upon the fact that we have not had very many very serious accidents in our mines during the past

year. There have been serious accidents involving considerable loss of life, but nothing in the shape of fearful catastrophes which we have been face to face with from time to time. The most serious have been the Rufford Colliery accident in the shaft in Nottingham, and the Cadder Colliery disaster in Scotland. To me, of course, I feel that the single accident which takes away our men and lads in singles, or in two's, is just as serious to the home where the dead is carried in as it can be to the home where a larger accident has taken place, and I am quite as anxious to prevent accidents which take away our people individually as I am to prevent the greater disasters which take place from time to time. This Federation is looked upon as one of its chief duties practically to take its part in endeavouring to secure safety legislation which would render more secure the lives of our people underground.

CADEBY REPORT.

We made a startling discovery this year when the report of the Cadeby Inquiry was given by the representative of this Federation—a most startling report—the most startling ever presented to our Federation. We found out, after approaching the Home Secretary on the question of what was going to be done in connection with that incriminating report, we found out then that the latest piece of mining legislation had been faulty in two or three of its clauses, that these clauses did not carry out the intention of the people who placed them on the Statute Book, and that a prosecution could not take place in that case, however clear it could have been proved that the General Manager or Managing Director of the Company was directly responsible for the deaths of those men. It is rather startling to find that, after all this skill in the House of Commons, within a few months of an important Act coming into force, you were told by the Home Secretary and the Home Office, who were responsible for putting it forward, had already found it required to be amended on two or three questions on which we called the Home Secretary's attention to the position of matters. I think that must be because of the extraordinary number of lawyers who are in the House of Commons. It was almost impossible, especially on industrial questions, to pass legislation through the House of Commons which is not so twisted and amended, as they call it, to make it quite impossible for its promoters to understand for what purpose it was passed at all.

CADDER DISASTER.

Now in the Cadder disaster we were rather startled again by the fact, which was already known to some of us, that the mining companies in the West of Scotland made no provision whatever to carry out the clauses of the Mines Act or the orders issued as to rescue work, or the clauses of the Mines Act which provides for rescue stations, as colliery owners or collectively, or for the equipment of rescue brigades. What startled us more than anything else was

the General Manager, who took upon himself the responsibility for the management of this mine, said definitely in Court, while he intended to carry out the order, and while he had already enrolled men to form a rescue brigade and posted their names on the pit bank and was going to train them, that he was waiting for orders before he took any action. He was asked in evidence—orders from whom? He said orders from the Coalmasters' Association. Now this is a startling state of matters in which colliery managers tell you at an inquiry that they were not guided in any way by law, but were waiting for the Coalmasters' Association to say whether or not the law was to be carried out. It was over eight months before that tragedy that the final notice had been sent out from the Home Office calling attention to the colliery owners not putting the law into operation. The accident took place eight months after and there was no rescue brigade, and the colliery was peculiarly fitted for such a rescue brigade, because this was not a question of an explosion where everything was blown out but a fire where the men dropped exhausted through the smoke and were trapped like rats in a cage. There was no rescue brigade to go down to attempt to save these men's lives. We were told by one of the Inspector of Mines that if the place had been fully equipped with a rescue brigade they could not have saved the lives of the men, because it was said that the men must have been dead half an hour after the smoke was discovered, yet we have a case of one man who was brought out fifteen hours afterwards unconscious who is still living to-day. I want to call the attention of the Conference to this fact—had it been a mine worker who had refused to carry out any clause of the Mines Act fixed to prevent accidents underground and told the Mines Inspector that he was not going to carry out the law until the Miners' Federation decided whether or not he was to carry it out, I believe he would have been prosecuted within a few days of the time of him making such a statement. I cannot conceive why there should be one method of dealing with miners and another method of dealing with the mineowners, and I sincerely hope that the Home Office will do more than issue circulars in future, and employers refusing to carry out the law will at least take the same course as they would with the men especially where safety is concerned and where they defy the law and refuse to carry it out.

DUBLIN GRIEVANCES, &c.

The Trades Union Congress was held at a time at which there was a sudden outburst of brutality and ferocity on the part of the civil authorities breaking out in Dublin and in Cornwall. The Trade Union Congress did not allow many minutes' opportunity of expressing its views as the result of this attack made on the workers in Dublin by the police and a day or two later of an attack made on the workers in the clay pits in Cornwall. This question was discussed at Manchester as might be expected, because there is a deeper interest being taken in certain circles in the trades union movement and its future.

DO STRIKES PAY?

It had been evinced for many years before that some of the newspapers had thrown open their columns for a discussion on the question as to whether or not strikes paid, that has called forth articles and criticisms from men who are active leaders in the trade union movement who have come through many great crises, led in many strikes and have been with their people in defending themselves in many lock-outs. They have also called forth criticisms from people who know very little really from the inside of a trade union movement. The question whether strikes pay, whether strikes in the past have paid, and whether strikes in the future are likely to pay are sometimes discussed by people who are outsiders so far as the trade union movement is concerned and really have no knowledge of the difficulties of the Trades Union Executive, and the trades union leader, who if they had two or three years in our own movement, had they come through the two or three years we have come, might have changed their views very quickly on the question of expediency as to what is best to do under all the circumstances. We have Mr. Philip Snowden making a statement that the Minimum Wage Act passed last year gave the miners more in increased wages than all that trades unionism had ever done. Now to me such a statement is amazing, coming from a person like Snowden, a student who ought to be a master in economics and industrial history. To suggest to the country that the passing of the Minimum Wage Act has conferred greater wages or benefits to our people than the work of this great Federation for fifteen or twenty years back is so ridiculous I hardly know how to express my opinion, yet the probability is that outsiders who do not know anything about it will accept him as an authority on the matter. I want to say that I know better than Philip Snowden that our trades union during the past fifteen or twenty years has conferred a hundred times more benefits from a wage point of view to the mining community than the Minimum Wage Act did. The Minimum Wage Act was only a partial Act, which only applied to a small number of individuals proportionately. I should like to point out to him the Midland miners in 1893, the Scottish miners, and the South Wales miners have had their struggles and went through poverty and misery fighting to establish a minimum wage principle for all underground workers, a boon which the law never touched, and when we say that trades unions which we now represent have been the instrument in establishing a general rate of wages fifty per cent. higher than it used to be, that fifty per cent. cannot be touched, that is what we have done by trades unionism absolutely independent of anyone. I do not agree whatever the real position may be, I do not agree that if Parliament had not interfered last year we would have been defeated. I am not prepared to admit that. We are prepared to use Parliament as we are entitled to to secure all the benefits we can, for the shortening of hours of labour, for a minimum rate of

wages, for all classes of workers as well as miners if you care to, but we cannot allow anyone to minimise the work of our trades union movement, because had it not been for the strike in 1893 and the sacrifice made the Midlands would not have secured the minimum, and the Scottish miners and Welsh miners would not have secured their benefits had it not been for strikes and fears of strikes. I want to say that our Federation as an organisation will use its power again should necessity arise. I believe in assisting our friends if we think that is the best way to do so substantially or to declare a general stoppage if we believe there is no other way out of the difficulty. I may say I do not believe in stopping Collieries here and there in a district in sympathy, I would rather deal with it in a common sense way. I am also of the opinion and have advised it locally and nationally, that if we have no other weapon in our hands then to strike, or to withdraw our labour, if you attempt to interfere with our right to strike I am afraid that in spite of the statements made as to the progress of humanity and higher ethical ideals, I believe that this Conference with the whole organisation behind them in the various districts would be back again to the old position of matters. The heart of capital is no softer to-day than it was before, and the only thing that we can do is to take heart while we are willing to enter into agreements and carry them out, and this Federation has always carried out agreements. While we are willing to do all that, we are not prepared to admit that the use of a trades union as a fighting force that that day has gone.

DUBLIN AND CORNWALL.

Now take the Dublin and Cornish workmen, and I would like to emphasise this in a great meeting of miners' delegates that the attack in Cornwall I certainly say was not only unprovoked but as unrighteous as that which took place in Dublin. The fact that in Dublin it has been followed by a wholesale lock out, and the starvation of a great mass of people has quite taken the minds of the trades union movement from Cornwall where the struggle is still on and all is centred on Dublin. Now I may say that there is a claim upon our sympathy for the people down in Cornwall, and I do not think the trades union movement should lose sight of these people who are rightly struggling for a principle. Now the employers in Dublin have proved conclusively they have made up their minds to crush out, if not trades unionism, at least to crush out a certain kind of trades unionism, have made up their mind to crush out trades unionism which was aggressive in any shape or form, they were quite prepared to accept a class of trades unionism which was small and had no power as a fighting force, but when a new aggressive fighting force comes along which they call Larkinism or Syndicalism this the employers are not prepared to accept, and say to their workmen that unless you leave this new union and unless you give us an undertaking never again to join this new movement then you will have to be locked out, and these are the people who have condemned sympathetic strikes in which

the workers in one district stops work because the other workers belonging to their organisation are fighting, telling us that it is Syndicalism, and these sympathetic strikes they are going to crush out, and in crushing them out they are taking exactly the same steps by locking out people all over the country because they belong to the organisation. I remember twenty-five or thirty years ago the very same thing took place in London when the unskilled workers were being organised, people who had been forgotten by the skilled workers who come to look upon themselves as superior to the docker or labourer—Tillett, Mann, and Burns were the pioneers at that time. The employers at that time said they were not going to deal with these people; they said it was not a trades union movement, it was a socialistic movement. It was a trade union movement led by Socialists, and has done a great deal to improve the conditions of the unskilled workers of this country and raised them into the position of wages earners equal to the skilled workers in the country. The same thing is now said in Dublin. I deny the right of the employers in Dublin or anywhere else to tell the workers what particular kind of Union he has got to join, we have the right to judge and our responsible workers in each country are the best judges as to what kind of Union they will join. I look upon them as having sufficient intelligence to be the best judges of what class of Union will be of most service to them. I wonder sometimes whether this affair in Dublin is only part of a greater movement which has for its purpose the crushing or the attempt to crush the trade union movement entirely, or if not to crush it out, at least tell the workers of this country what particular kind of trades unionism will be allowed to live. We have ominous signs in the great trade movement which is about to be organised with a capital, an enormous capital, which is being organised with the avowed purpose of meeting aggressive trades unionism. I do not fear an attempt of that kind; as a matter of fact I rather welcome an attempt of that kind. There is nothing in the world that will bring the British worker to his senses sooner than an organised attempt by the employing classes to crush his organisation out and take away his right of citizenship from him. I do not think this movement will fructify. These people, with their two hundred or three hundred thousand pounds, will give salaries to well-paid officials instead of supporting strikes. They talk about the big salaries of trades unionists, but they cannot hold the candle to these strike breakers and their salaries. I think our Federation may make up their mind, so far as they are concerned, they are perfectly safe, and they can stand ready and straightforward to face a movement of this kind. Again I say we have no desire, though our Federation may be strong, we have no desire to fight for the love of fighting or for the sake of fighting. There is no leader in this room wishes to encourage that idea. God knows it is a terrible thing to our people, and especially to those who are responsible leaders, but I think that even in the smallest district it is necessary that we should be prepared for eventualities.

MINES NATIONALISATION.

We have launched the Mines Nationalisation Bill, which has been introduced into the House of Commons and had a first reading under the ten minutes rule; that is all. Of course, that is only a kicking off. We knew we could not advance it to any great extent, but it was necessary to introduce it in order that we might have an opportunity of carrying on a propaganda for the conversion of the people of this country to the nationalisation of mines. I think that the present year's transactions in the mining industry will more than anything else justify us in the agitation for the nationalisation of the mines. I believe never in the history of the mining industry have there been fortunes made equal to those made during the past twelve or eighteen months, and I think it may be reasonably said, well said, that the mine workers of this country have not got anything like their share of the increased prices which have been taken from the general public for coal sold. We never can. Of course, our trades unions have never been in a position to force anything like a fair share, but I venture to say this, if we could have paid a fair value for the mines, I mean for the working stock of the mines, not for the minerals—which we do not propose to pay for when we take over the mines—we could have paid out the owner. I believe in six years of the coal trade as it is now, we could have paid every penny of the stock of the present holders of the mines and not a penny taxation given. I may say that in the whole of the mining industry it is said that on an average it is paying twenty per cent. If that is so then it is a justification for the nationalisation of the mines. If it is not true, we can say to the owners: "Let us see your books." We can say: "Will you be kind enough to place your books before an Accountant and let us see if it is true." I do not think they would do that. I want this Conference to realise again that with regard to the nationalisation of the mines there is a great struggle before us, and the general public must be educated up to this point that it will be in their interests to nationalise the mines. The general public will not take part in it because they say it is for the purpose of improving the conditions of the miners. We must be able to prove to them that though the conditions of the miners will be improved, everybody will be bettered by it, that the coal supply would be more normal, regular, and cheaper, than now exists, to the individual, through such a change. I believe that every man in this hall is of that opinion, and that we must bring the general public with us from that point of view, then Parliament will have to follow the will of the majority of the people of this country.

DISTRESS IN DUBLIN.

I was going to say to you, I think this should be dealt with to-day, I forgot to do so, and Mr. Harvey has called my attention to it. As a result of the lock-out in Dublin there is a dire distress there. I want to say, this is one of the things you hear little about,

but some of us here know more about and will know more about it in time; however there is intense poverty amongst the working classes of Dublin. I do not think there is any city of the same size where the reward of labour is so low as in this city in which the employing classes has so little toleration, so little soul, so little real Christian spirit. This class of people, which is our class, live from hand to mouth without hardly a week's provisions before them, What then can it be, what must it be, after a six or seven weeks struggle which is going on? The Co-operative movement is doing good work, and the mining community has been approached, and considerable sums have been given. Your Executive is of the opinion that we should act as a whole in a matter of this kind. I do not want to go into the needs of the case, but there are 120,000 men, women, and children, who are dependent absolutely at the present time on the gifts and grants of their fellow-workers in Great Britain. I hope they will not be disappointed, because if the workers of Dublin are defeated through starvation, then for many years to come they will be under the heel and whip of Boss Murphy. I do not think there is any need to say that the people of Dublin will fight; they will tighten in their belts; they will fight if they can only get the bare necessities of life. Your Executive have agreed to ask you as a Federation, on behalf of the Miners' Federation, to make a grant of £1,000 per week, which will be sent to Mr. Bowerman to be distributed in food amongst the starving people of Dublin. I feel sure that will be received practically unanimously by this Conference. It must be known that £10,000 has been promised by the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, and our share of that £10,000 will mean £2,500—we are fully one-fourth of the trades union movement—and we will be responsible to the extent of £2,500 of that £10,000; that ought to be known, but in addition to that, your Executive are of the opinion that this Conference to-day should grant £1,000 per week to assist these people in Dublin.

“DAILY CITIZEN.”

I would like to say that to-morrow is the first birthday of the *Daily Citizen*. It may be said that, as President of this Federation, I am showing partiality on my part by singling out one newspaper and speaking upon it. Well, my only reason for doing so is because I look upon the *Citizen* as a Trades Union and Labour Paper owned by ourselves and run by ourselves in the interests of the workers of this country. It has finished its first twelve months of its life, and from its birth it has been active and kicking. It has been strong and healthy right from the beginning, and some of us have seen its usefulness and it has a great future before it. God knows there is plenty to be done if we are to get the right thing for our own people. I sincerely, on behalf of this Conference, congratulate the *Citizen* on its first birthday, and I want to wish it a long and prosperous life and to use its great powers in the interests of down-

trodden humanity in this country. Your Executive were empowered last time to test the Federation on the question of investing 1s. per member per year for three years. Well, our Federation has decided in favour, and I expect with that assistance the *Citizen* will not only celebrate this birthday but will make sure of many birthdays to come, and that it will become a tremendously useful organ of the labour movement.

CHESTERFIELD ELECTION.

I want in conclusion to say a few words, and what I may say is not said out of any bitterness of spirit or with a view of giving offence to anyone. I feel constrained to say something with regard to our own position and the Labour Party of this country. I do not think, as President, after what has taken place during the past year, I could attend this Conference and remain silent on the position of affairs which took place at Chesterfield. Rightly or wrongly, our movement, after years of consideration, decided to become a part of the National Labour Party. We decided by a ballot vote, not any snatch vote in a Conference, not any snatch vote in the Branches, but by a general vote of the whole membership, a vote which was really a second vote, having on the first vote refused to do so, then after full consideration we agreed to a general ballot. Knowing fully its constitution and aim as a party, I have taken an active part in bringing a large number of people to our way of thinking on the matter, that if we are to obtain our economic social salvation, and if we are to get men into the House of Commons, it must be done through our own people, and not through either of the capitalistic parties. That, at least, was the reason for the formation of the Labour Party. Our membership is made up, in the first place, largely of men of different politics, men who followed Conservatives and followed Liberals, who were good trades unionists trying side by side to better their conditions, but at election times they were divided between the two capitalist parties, who cared nothing about their economic conditions, and in order to bring all sections together, this advanced movement or Labour Party was formed, which by ballot we agreed to join. Now recently a vacancy occurred and an election took place at Chesterfield, and our friend Kenyon was invited, was duly adopted, and secured the approval of our Executive, and I dare say of our mining movement, because none of us had any feeling at all against Mr. Kenyon. Everyone who took any active part in politics would have been glad to do anything for Mr. Kenyon. I want to make it perfectly clear that so far as Mr. Kenyon was concerned we believed that it would be an ordinary labour fight, that Mr. Kenyon was fighting under the labour banner within the constitution of the Labour Party. As you are aware the Labour Party did not finally endorse Mr. Kenyon's candidature, and if an opportunity is to be given, which ought to be given to having a full discussion on this matter, I want to keep clear of any debatable

grounds. I have no right to enter on debatable points. I only wish to try and state so far as I am concerned one or two facts, and I think the matter ought to be debated sometime this week, we might give an hour or two to it. It is an important question. Mr. Kenyon fought and won the fight with a handsome majority; fought and won the fight with the full knowledge that the official Labour Party and this Executive of the Miners' Federation were not in that fight with him. It dawned suddenly upon certain people at the heads of the Liberal Party that this was the beginning of the end, that the fact that Mr. Kenyon, without the official support of the Labour Party, or the official support of the Miners' Federation had been able to win Derbyshire that all they had to do was to put forward a claim that the time had come when the Labour Party should be swallowed up by the Liberal Party. Well, these people made a big mistake, this is not the indication at all of the Chesterfield Election, the real indication of the Chesterfield Election is, that the miners of Derbyshire have proved their loyalty to their organisation and their loyalty to Mr. Kenyon, one of their officials, and that they resented any outside interference. I do not blame them for that mark you, it shows a loyalty which I would like to see everywhere so far as the great trades union movement is concerned, but it does not prove that the miners of Derbyshire do not want to be in the Labour movement, it did prove that in Derbyshire, as in many other parts I think, that the true position of the Labour Party requires a very considerable amount of propaganda to bring these people really into line with our own position, with the fact that we are really members of the Labour Party because in many other places that propaganda work has been done, Now it has led to a statement being made that the Labour Party must change its Constitution, that the Labour Party is going too fast, and that the time has come to put on the brakes. Well, I am not at least a brakesman, I am a stokesman, I am a fireman, in this movement. I have been firing for some time and I am going to try to keep the coal supply going. I do not think the engine is going fast enough at all events not for me, it may be going too fast for some people, we do not want to put on the brakes, yet our movement must either be true to any movement we join or leave it. I would not object if the miners decided that their members did not want to be a part of the Labour Party, that they would be part of the Liberal Party or Tory Party. I would not object if they decided in that way but I will object to branches so long as we by a vote of the members being part of the Labour Party, I will object to any disloyalty on the part of any members in this Federation. It is just the same as this Federation being engaged in a strike and one County refusing to stand side by side with the other people because they disagreed with the stoppage, that is not the kind of stuff the Miners' Federation is made of, and I hope this lesson will not discourage us and make us believe that the great Labour movement of this Country has run its course, we are only at the beginning of the course and we must go on day by day, week by

week, because there are only two sides in politics, the Workers and the Capitalists, and so far as the interests of the workers are concerned they are not the interests of the other side. I hope I may be forgiven for this reference here, but if you had denied me the right of making such a reference I could not have presided at this meeting. I felt I was entitled to express my opinion, and whatever I have said I have said without any intention of raising any bitterness of feeling in the minds of anyone here. I am not blaming anyone, anyone can make mistakes, and I am hoping and trusting that this will bring us more closely together to work for the economic side, the Labour political side. I thank you for your kindness in listening to me.