

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Mr. RICHARDS: We have had to postpone, as you will have noticed consequent upon the visit of the Mayor, what is after all one of the most important parts of the business of this Annual Conference, that is the President's address. I have much pleasure in asking the Chairman to deliver his annual address.

EVENTS SINCE 1912.

The CHAIRMAN: Friends,—We are gathered together at Swansea for our Annual Conference after an interval of twelve years. Since then many difficulties have had to be surmounted by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

We have had the Great War, which commenced in 1914, and was supposed to finish in 1918. It is said that we were on the side which won the war. If we did, we have certainly lost the peace.

The workers always do. Wars are brought about by the capitalists and financiers who carry on the game of profiteering during the war, and after, at the workers' expense, so that I hope we, the workers of the world will resist any attempt in the future to bring about war between nations.

We have been faced with lock-outs and strikes, and unemployment. These are matters which I need not go into in detail at the present moment.

We had the Sankey Commission of 1919, which the leaders of the then Coalition Government agreed to honour. When the findings of the inquiry were submitted to the Government they refused to accept that portion which referred to nationalisation and unification of the mining industry.

The reduction in hours from eight to seven per day was put into operation, which at all costs we shall not give up, and we must proceed as opportunity presents itself to carry out the remainder of the above inquiry for a six-hour day.

We also got the welfare scheme of 1d. per ton on all output of coal in order to improve the social amenities of mining areas, and by the application of this fund up to the present day many mining areas have been made much pleasanter to reside in.

We must press for the Welfare Fund to continue, and as long as we have royalty owners drawing large sums of money from royalties on mineral which they themselves never put there we ought to use every energy to get at least 2d. per ton from them to add to the Welfare Fund to form a nucleus for a fund for mine workers when they can no longer follow their employment. Provision should be made by which they may be able to live by their own fireside free from Poor Law relief or the taint of Poor Law institutions.

Since we last met in Swansea in 1912 South Wales has suffered by the passing of many of their leaders. I might make mention of such stalwarts as the Right Hon. W. Abraham, M.P., better known as "Mabon," John Williams, Alfred Onions, James Winston, James Manning, D. Morgan Captain E. Gill, J. Davies, William Vyce, W. E. Morgan, and J. Williams, M.P., who all took their part in the Federation work in trying to improve the lot of the worker.

MEMBERSHIP, ETC.

In looking up the position in 1912 as to the number of persons employed in or about mines and the number of members in the Miners' Federation I have taken different periods in order to show what has taken place up to the present time:—

Year.	No. employed in or about mines.		Federation memberships.
1912.....	1,089,090	.....	586,000
1916.....	998,063	.....	715,890
1920.....	1,144,311	.....	904,229
1923.....	1,160,000	.....	749,860
1924.....	1,192,300	.....	788,520

The increase in membership for 1924 over 1923 is 38,660.

In looking at these figures there is great need for a thorough system of organisation in our several coalfields. Further, in looking through the various districts, we find that some have fared worse than others through lapses in membership in their district organisation. In the main the most marked suffering through loss of membership is in those districts where their contributions have been reduced, so that I hope we shall not hesitate to accept the Executive Committee's resolution for a uniform contribution of 1s. per week, and also that a determined effort on our part will be made to get every mine worker organised throughout the whole of the coalfields, as we need complete reorganisation, both industrially and politically, if we intend getting the reforms in wages, hours, housing, workmen's compensation, nationalisation of mines, minerals, railways, land, and other social reforms which are so much needed to make it possible for all to live a fuller and brighter life on this earth.

WAGES.

Since our last Annual Conference at Folkestone your Executive Committee have been trying to negotiate improved wages conditions. They ultimately came before a Conference, and reported the results of those deliberations, when the Conference decided to recommend the members in the various coalfields to reject the terms offered and ask for an inquiry to be set up. By a majority vote this recommendation was carried. The Government then set up a Court of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Buckmaster. The result of that Court's findings amounted to nothing except it showed the impossibility under the present system of private enterprise in the mining industry to pay a wage which will give to the workers in each mining area a decent standard of living in order to meet present-day requirements.

Subsequently, after further negotiation, as you are all aware, a new agreement has been fixed up for a period of twelve months, then subject to a month's notice from either side. It does not give what we would have desired, but it was the best possible agreement to be obtained under the present circumstances.

If we are each determined to do our best in getting a strong organisation, paying a uniform contribution, realising the need for unity and concord in our ranks, then when the time comes to make another agreement, we shall be able to review the position in the various coalfields composing this Federation with greater hope of achieving better conditions than we have done at the present time.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

The present Workmen's Compensation Act has not been long in operation, although it has been sufficiently long to confirm the opinion we had of it before it became law. It bristles with difficulties. It is worse in many respects than the old Act with its war additions. It is only an improvement on the old Act in cases of fatal accidents with respect to the dependents. It is considerably worse than the Holman Gregory Committee brought forward, which Committee was composed of all shades of opinion, and whose findings would have been a reform in compensation law in the right direction. I am giving you a short comparison between our Compensation Act and the Act that is in operation in Ontario.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

ONTARIO.

The workman cannot contract out of the Act.

No contribution must be collected from the workman.

No lump sum can be paid to redeem liability, except in cases where degree of incapacity is not more than 10 per cent.

In fatal cases :—

Widow entitled to lump sum of £20.

Burial expenses not exceeding £35.

£2 per week during widowhood.

On remarriage a lump sum equal to two years' compensation.

£2 a month for each child under 16 years of age.

Rate of compensation two-thirds of average earnings for total disablement up to a maximum of £400 per year earnings, with a minimum of £2 10s. per week.

If average earnings less than this amount receives full amount of his average earnings.

If it seems desirable to continue existing household by aunt, sister, or other suitable person who acts as foster-mother, may be paid same allowance for herself as if widow of deceased workman.

Injured workman entitled to all medical aid, including surgical, hospital, and skilled nurses' services necessary, and provision of artificial limb, which is kept in repair for him free of cost for one year.

Out of every £100 the employers pay to the Board £98 goes directly to the injured workman or to his dependents. Only £2 goes in management costs.

So that it is the duty of the workers generally, whatever Government is in power, to press for a much more adequate compensation law.

The Act requires re-modelling from beginning to end and making provision for :—

(a) The inclusion of all industrial diseases.

(b) When an injured workman is declared fit for work, it must be the responsibility of the owners to find suitable work, or continue to pay compensation.

ACCIDENTS IN MINES.

We must seek by all the power we possess, industrially and politically to direct public attention to the appalling number of accidents which are constantly occurring in and about our mines. We must direct our efforts in the direction of seeking to reduce these accidents, which everybody must admit are far too frequent. While not seeking to particularly blame those who are in charge, yet we believe much more might be done by them and by the Government of the country in appointing a Royal Commission to go into the Mines Acts, re-draft, and bring them more up to date.

GREAT BRITAIN.

Contracting out provided for.

Lump sums are allowed subject to Registrar of County Court recording agreement.

Widow £300.

£15 when no dependents.

Nothing.

6s. a week for each child up to 16 years. Maximum, £600. Minimum, £200.

Maximum weekly compensation 30s. Average earnings 10s. to 30s. per week. Two-thirds compensation.

Average earnings	Compensation
31/-	20/3
" " 34/-	21/-
" " 38/-	22/-
" " 40/-	22/6
" " 60/-	30/-

No provision.

No provision except first aid.

In the year 1920 it cost £8,851,607 in insurance premiums to pay benefits amounting to £2,980,755.

When we find such disasters as Maltby Main, Redding, Nunnery, and others happening; attempts being made to misconstrue the reading of the 1911 Act, admissions being made in the case of Redding, there is need for a tightening up of the Act.

In connection with the Nunnery disaster there is no Act to deal with the life of haulage ropes, a large number of which are used to ride men in and out from their work. No provision for safety appliances. In case of a haulage rope breaking in riding men down inclines, as in the Nunnery case where seven were killed, and over 50 injured, and some seriously, whilst there are plenty of inventions on the market there is nothing in the Mines Act to make their use compulsory.

In addition to that the time has arrived when the workmen should take their part in the control of the mining industry, and we should request the Government to at once put into operation the 1920 Mining Industry Act, particularly when we note the increased number of accidents since 1914 to 1923, which are as follows:—

	Fatal.		Non-fatal who played more than seven days.
1914.....	1,219	.....	160,486
1915.....	1,291	.....	No returns given.
1916.....	1,313	.....	" "
1917.....	1,370	.....	" "
1918.....	1,401	.....	" "
1919.....	1,118	.....	118,486
1920.....	1,103	.....	118,490
1921.....	766	.....	86,888 (13 weeks lock-out took place in this year).
1922.....	1,105	.....	186,388
1923.....	1,297	.....	212,256

It is high time with such a large increase in accidents that every possible reform should be brought about at once to reduce this serious maiming and loss of human life, in addition to what I have already suggested. The deputies and firemen should be controlled and paid by the State, when they would be in the position of carrying out their duties without fear or favour from the colliery owner or workman.

And, further, we ought to have a class of mines inspectors who shall at least have had five years' practical experience at the coal face, who would spend their time inspecting the whole of the mines in the different areas at least once in three months. A thorough inspection of all the workings and air ways, and not a sample inspection as is being done at the present time with the present number of mines inspectors. These practical mines workers' inspectors to be paid by the State.

INTERNATIONAL SITUATION.

Turning for a moment from what I might call home affairs to foreign affairs. In many of the countries the difficulties of our brother mine workers are very much similar to ours. They have been experiencing a very trying time, due to the effects of the war, from attempts to reduce wages, lengthen hours underground and on the surface; and particularly in Germany, where the mine workers for the time being have had to submit to a lengthening of the hours. I know that whatever can be done to assist the workers in other countries this Federation will not be slow in any effort which is required to bring the Miners' International into full strength and cement the bonds of unity.

POLITICAL OUTLOOK.

Since our last Annual Conference there has been something almost like a revolution in the political life of the country. Last year at this time we never dreamt that men we have known and worked with in the building up of our Labour and Socialist Movement would have been called upon to govern the country.

It is our proud recollection that the miners led the way into Parliament in those far-off days when Alexander McDonald and Tom Burt first won their seats in the House of Commons, and we are equally proud to know that the faith of the other great men from the mines who became Members of Parliament is now so fully justified.

It has been a jibe of some of the "better born" of the governing class in these later days "that Labour was not fit to govern," and there was rather a widespread fear that our people would make a mess of the job, even if the chance should come our way.

The newspapers in the main did nothing to suggest otherwise until the change became inevitable, then in a night—in the twinkling of an eye almost—the word went round, "Fair play for the Labour Government," and for a while the patronage of the Press became almost as fulsome as previously its criticism had been scornful.

In spite of all that has been said and written, however, the great fact remains that for the first time in our history a party of workers—men and women who believe that Labour, manual and mental, is the real basis of life—are now directing the fortunes of the country.

We who have worked with Ramsay MacDonald in the Socialist movement and have watched his life work in guiding the Labour Party the last 20 years, have had no doubt as to his ability. We have always known that he has been fit to hold his own with any who have sat on the Government Benches in the House of Commons at any time, and I, for one, rejoice that he has now the opportunity of showing to the movement, to the nation, and to the world at large that real statesmanship may spring as surely from the firesides of the poor as from the universities or the country houses of the well-to-do.

It is true that, strictly speaking, Labour is in office, but not in power in the full sense. It was obviously with that fact fully in mind that the first Labour Cabinet was formed. There were surprises which caused questionings in the movement, and it was clear that some of the most trusted of our people had not been convinced of the wisdom of Labour taking office.

Things never happen in this world just as we should like them, and perfection is a rare quality, but it does not take a very imaginative eye to see that when men and women in the years to come look back upon these last few months they will mark them as red-letter days in British history, days that will stand out as great landmarks on the path that leads on to working-class freedom.

For the mere fact that Labour is in office without doubt has been as valuable to us in convincing the people that the Labour movement has a message and a meaning as years of propaganda in the streets or on the platform.

Labour, speaking from the Government Benches, addresses the world, and is listened to both at home and abroad.

For years Labour has been preaching a policy of international peace that has apparently been falling on deaf ears so far as the politicians, the Press, or the public have been concerned, yet to-day that policy, steadily and wisely pursued, is creating a new spirit in our foreign relations, and in Russia, in Germany, in France, in America, British goodwill is recovering its long-lost standards. Labour is accomplishing with its simple, frank humanity what mere cleverness and diplomatic manipulation could never achieve.

Nowhere was Labour's victories more heartily welcome than among our people in the Colonies. Men and women who for one reason or another—wanted work or wished for wider adventure—have left this country and made their homes in Canada, in Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa—many and many a miner and miner's wife among them—have followed with real gladness the successes that we at home have secured. Many of them feel that the hard pioneering days they suffered here have not been all in vain, and that the rising of Labour to still greater power will make for the good of our people wherever they may be found.

Yet, we are told, almost every breakfast time and every evening by our newspapers that the Labour Government has not kept its election pledges—it hasn't yet produced the "New Jerusalem" we have set out to build. The unemployed are still with us, and, as we in our own industry know only too well, a real living wage has not yet been secured for all who toil. What wonderful people these critical friends of ours really are. Their anxiety for peace in the mining industry is too moving for mere words. Remember how every mining reform has been literally wrung from the powers that be from the days when children and their mothers made money in the mines for their owners to these later days when it seems as though progress can only be made by strikes or harder striving.

For a hundred years the governing class has seen this great industry of ours develop from little better than a slave trade by the sheer dogged daring of our forefathers and ourselves. They have witnessed the greatest of our raw material wasted in its method of production and wasted in its use. The claim for the protection and the saving of the lives of our men has been emphasised over and over again by the most terrible disasters.

How many explosions has it taken to waken the conscience of these men to the sacredness of the miner's life, let the records show. Yet in spite of all this the older politicians and their apologists dare to raise their critical cries within six months of a team of absolutely new men taking office.

Our policy for our industry is well-known. We hold that the coal of the country should be the property of the people, and we as miners would seek to serve our fellows fairly rather than toil for the gain of a favoured few who live by our exploitation. Already this session we have tested these prating defenders of the profiteer on this policy of ours, and have found their great professions counterfeit.

The Labour Government, like ourselves, believes fundamentally in the rightness of nationalisation as a national policy, not "the mines for the miners," as our glib little Welsh Wizard suggests. "The mines for the nation" is our policy and "the government of the industry by the miners and the people" is our method. We say that until the miners, manual and technical alike, join with representatives of the nation to run our industry for the nation's good there will be no peace amongst us. Too many generations of our mining folk have wrought for private profit and for landlord's gain. We seek to serve all and not a few, and, thank God, the people

themselves at long last are beginning to see more clearly the wisdom of our claim.

The majority of this Parliament, following the lead of the older party leaders, have denied our demands. When we remember how coalowners in the days gone by have bought their way to power and place by the direction of vast sums, won by our people at the coal face, to the political funds of these older parties, there is no need for surprise. These older parties are only "delivering the goods."

Let us look ahead. Remember that should ever a Labour Government get a Mines Nationalisation Bill through the House of Commons the strongly entrenched ranks of these same profiteers in the peerage will remain to be faced and overcome. We are only on the threshold of that task, but let it be known that we mean business, and when we feel our conscious power, then privilege and its defenders may look out for a grim and determined struggle.

If our Labour Government has not been so revolutionary in its early acts as these full-blooded Tory and Liberal critics would pretend to long for, they have at any rate given the mass of the common people some earnest of their desire to ease the burdens of the poor.

Philip Snowden's Budget needs no apology; the women who keep our cupboards know its value. It is 30 years since the Liberal Party talked about freeing the breakfast table of taxation. There have been many Liberal Budgets since the Newcastle programme was framed in 1891, but it has been left to the first Socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer to translate these ancient Liberal professions into something like actual practice.

The sight of old Liberal Chancellors strutting round claiming credit for Liberal principles they have themselves forsworn for years is a sight for the gods. Harcourt, Asquith, McKenna, Lloyd George, any one of them, could have swept away these food taxes during the years they were in office, but Snowden has done in months what they failed to accomplish in many complete Parliaments.

And if the profiteers, true to their everlasting principles, have raised the price of butter against the reduction in tea, or have stuck old labels on new packets to save their profits for themselves, as many have, working men and working women should now be wise enough to take their custom to the Co-operative and learn the lesson of self-dependence and self-respect.

Give the Labour Government a proper chance, give it real power, and the profiteers will get their deserts.

Next year if our friend Philip has to frame a budget the old fight with the landlords will be renewed, and in the meantime we can confidently look forward to the abolition of the thrift disqualification, which has prevented so many decent old men and women from getting the old age pension. Pensions for widowed mothers will also surely come if Parliament will stand for our way of raising the money.

There has been some criticism because the Government has not introduced the Capital Levy. Is there a single man or woman with a sensible interest in politics who expected that with a majority against the levy in the country, as well as in the House of Commons, any Labour Chancellor would have been fool enough to have forgotten these facts? Both people and Parliament still apparently desire to continue paying heavy war interest, which, with the reduced cost of living, is worth much more now than when it was first incurred. So far as the Labour Party is concerned the Capital

Levy still holds the field as the only way to reduce the War Debt, and the few thousands of people whom it would affect need have no illusion on the subject.

When I read the attacks upon the Labour Government for not dealing drastically with the unemployment problem my mind goes back to the lonely figure of Keir Hardie, the first Member for the unemployed. How many years did he plead with many of these selfsame critics—year after year, and all in vain—for a chance to be given to the Right to Work Bill?

Our old friend Will Crooks could move the House of Commons to tears by telling of his own struggles searching for work from one end of the country to the other, but he could never move enough of its Members into the right Lobby to get the Bill a Second Reading.

These people have always known that if the unemployed are abolished—if there are more jobs going than there are men—then wages cannot be reduced, and it is all up with this system of industry they are so fond of.

Tom Shaw had only been at the Ministry of Labour a few weeks when, in the intervals of clearing up some of the trade disputes that had been left as a legacy from the old regime, he abolished the "gap" and eased the administration of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

The removal of the "Gap" to these comfortably off people means nothing. Many of them were pleaded with last year and the year before to abolish it, but they refused. The best thing that could happen to some of them would be to spend a few weeks on the dole, varied with a week or two on the "gap"; it would do them all the good in the world.

Our Minister of Labour did right to devote his first attention to this sort of ambulance work, as it may be called, though, in my opinion, anything that helps to keep together the homes of the poor is something more than that.

The bigger schemes will come, but not, in the popular phrase, "like rabbits out of a hat." That phrase will follow our friend Tom Shaw throughout his life. Parliament has been so used to the wiles and deceptions of a Wizard that it has not quite realised that a workman sets about his job in a vastly different way.

We miners know something about rotten housing conditions, and I would fail if I did not on your behalf give a word of appreciation here to our friend John Wheatley, the Minister of Health. He has produced a scheme that seems a little too much for the other side. As an example of imaginative and practical statesmanship, it has struck the public in a way that promises well for its success. His analysis of the cost of building a house should be kept in mind by every man and woman in the country. The cost of building a house worth £500 works out in weekly charges as follows:—

	s.	d.
The cost of the land	0	1½ per week.
The cost of the materials.....	1	10½ „
The cost of labour.....	1	3 „
The cost of money	6	6 „

At the moment and under existing circumstances the Government has to do the best it can with the financial powers in control. As the men and women realise that the whole strength that lies behind big finance is simply the credit and confidence that exists in their willingness to produce wealth, they will take steps to have that credit and confidence used for the nation

as a whole and not for the limited good of bank shareholders, maybe cleverer than themselves, but not half so necessary for national well-being. Wheatley in one or two sentences has given a lesson that will have great effect on the minds of all of us.

England is not yet the "home for heroes" that many men coming back from the war expected to find. Labour tried to secure decent allowances and conditions for their families while they were away, but the money-lenders' demand for their 6 per cent. was too insistent. Now the burden of the debt cripples every attempt to promote reform on a large scale. The economists of the last two or three Governments resisted Labour's demands for decent treatment for pensioners—the meanness of some of their petty economies is beyond belief—and it is a relief to have a Labour Pensions Minister like Fred Roberts putting into steady practice some of the reforms that he and others fought for unsuccessfully when they were in opposition.

Probably the meanest action of any modern Government was the cutting down of expenditure on the education of working-class children. It was easy for Geddes and his kind—with their own youngsters awaiting their turn at the universities—to scale down the grants that would give working men's children a fair chance, but it was a crime that working class parents will not readily forget.

Already, however, the Labour Education Minister, Charles Trevelyan, is making up lee-way. The engines are being reversed, and given a Labour majority, and the chance of securing success with our financial policy, and the way from the elementary school to the University will open up for all the willing boys and girls in the country.

Factory workers are looking forward to the new Bill of the Home Secretary to recover much ground that was lost during the war and to make headway in the direction of demands that Labour Congresses have made for years past, and everybody will wish Arthur Henderson success in the task he has undertaken.

Workers on the countryside will also have reason to remember this Labour Government, if only for the attempt that Noel Buxton, the Minister for Agriculture, is making to renew the Wages Board and so secure for the land workers something like a decent rate of wages for his labour.

These are only a few of the many things that Labour has or is trying to achieve—these are what some of our old friends in the Government are busy with, and considering all the circumstances they are certainly "making good."

The only woman, Margaret Bondfield—the first woman to hold office in any British Government—well known to all of us, now speaks and works as earnestly and as sincerely for our women folk as ever she has done during all the years she has striven with us in our own Trade Union and Socialist movement.

It is not a Government of Archangels—they are all very human folk; most of them very like ourselves. Many of them have been through the small sieve and fortunately have not forgotten the experience.

Their fitness to govern is now no longer in doubt. The country is only wondering now why our people were not given an earlier chance to show what was in them.

As to the future, we shall go steadily onward. The work is only taking a newer shape. We are only beginning on a new seam, and the cutting may be a bit easier.

The younger men and women coming along will never know the evil conditions that we have fought against. Their road to happiness will be all the easier for all the strugglings and strivings that we have had. The children will be brighter, their mothers happier; and when the time comes for us to take our rest, we too, all of us, will be the better men because of the hard fights we have fought, and the contentment we have won for those who follow after.

Owing to the Labour Party taking office and forming the Government, prominent workers in connection with our Federation have answered the call and taken office. From our Executive there has gone the Rt. Hon. Stephen Walsh, who has become Secretary for War, Rt. Hon. Vernon Hartshorn, Postmaster-General; our late respected Secretary Frank Hodges has become Civil Lord of the Admiralty, other members of the Federation have been called to fill the following positions:—

Right Hon. W. Adamson, Secretary for Scotland.

John Lawson, Financial Secretary, War Office.

William Lunn, Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Trade (Overseas Trade Department).

Fred Hall, John Robertson, G. H. Warne, Lords Commissioners of the Treasury.

John Allen Parkinson, Controllor of the Royal Household.

R. Richardson, Charity Commissioner in the House of Commons.

James Brown, High Commissioner, Church of Scotland.

I, on your behalf, wish them every success in the responsible positions which they hold. Also to the 31 of the Mining Members of Parliament, although not in the Cabinet, who are doing their best to carry out the promises made during the Election.

The total number of seats contested by Federation candidates was 47, and the total number returned on behalf of this Federation was 43. Let me express the hope, which I know will be heartily endorsed by all of you, that when the next Election comes along we shall do even better than that.

OBITUARIES.

We have lost during the year in more ways than that of wages, etc.; we have lost great stalwarts from the mine workers' movement who were held in high esteem not only by the various district associations, where their lives were largely spent, but by this Federation. They were always striving to bring about better conditions for all workers.

The names of our deceased brothers are:—

Samuel Roebuck, Yorkshire Mine Workers,

T. H. Cann, Durham Mine Workers,

Alfred Hollinshead, Yorkshire Engine Winders,

Joseph Toyne, Cleveland Miners.

To the relatives of these and to the relatives of those of our other members, although not so prominent, who have given their best to the movement and who have passed away during this year, I, on your behalf, offer our sincere condolence and deepest sympathy. We will try to carry on the good work they, along with us, have commenced, and endeavour to see that not one jot of the good work they accomplished shall be lost to the movement by any act of ours or by any neglect.

Since our last Annual Conference two of our colleagues have retired from active work in their districts and the Federation, i.e., Mr. Levi Lovett (Leicestershire Miners' Association) and Mr. John Hoskin (Financial Secretary, Yorkshire Mine Workers' Association).

We feel deeply indebted to them both for the services which they have rendered to the movement in their respective districts, and for their help in advancing the principles governing the Miners' Federation.

I, on your behalf, send this message to them, that they may long be spared in good health and all that makes life pleasant to enjoy their well-earned rest.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Vice-Presidents and the Treasurer and Secretaries, and the members of the Executive Committee, and indeed, all the members of the Miners' Federation, for the kindness and concern which they showed to me in my severe illness in the latter part of 1923 and the early part of 1924.

I know from past experience you will assist me to conduct this annual gathering in such a way that we shall all look back upon this week's work in years to come with pleasure and pride in the full knowledge that good feeling and honesty to each other was shown in discussing the various resolutions on the agenda which have for their object the bringing about of social reforms so necessary for the uplifting of all to a higher and brighter standard of livelihood.