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The International Miners' Congress

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The Committee have made many changes in the classification of individual articles; but the chief alteration in the Board of Trade proposals relates to terminal charges. There are three possible modes of dealing with them: authorize railway companies to charge reasonable sums for terminal services; fix an individual maximum for station and service terminals at every station in the United Kingdom; fix a uniform maximum, based on a fair average. Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Courtenay Boyle preferred the third solution, not as perfect, but as open to fewer objections than the two other modes. The Joint Committee have decided that the companies may charge a reasonable sum within a certain maximum, to be determined in case of dispute by arbitrators—which means in practice the first method. In other words, a reasonable sum, having regard to the services and the nature of the stations, may be charged. The customers of the companies are likely to regard this solution, with the outlook of litigation which it presents, as a sorry ending to their agitation for the last ten years against terminal charges of any kind.

JOHN MACDONELL

THE INTERNATIONAL MINERS' CONGRESS

THE International Miners' Congress held during the month of April at Paris arose out of the Congress that met at Jolimont in Belgium last year. Ninety-nine delegates were present, representing, it was claimed, 909,167 members, but, as the membership of Continental unions is a matter of estimation rather than of accurate figures, the above total number of miners represented by delegates must be accepted with some degree of reserve. Great Britain sent 41 delegates. Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., in his opening address as President dwelt strongly on the necessity of union amongst miners, and pointed out that without self-control, moderation, and wise counsel International Federation was impossible.

The burning question for the Congress to decide was the method of voting. The English representatives contended that the votes of the delegates should have weight in proportion to the number of members the delegates of each country represented. The Continental delegates urged that the voting on any question should be by 'nationalities.' In voting by 'nationalities' the majority of delegates from each state decides by show of hands how that state is to vote and then each state gives one vote in accordance with this decision. The result is that the smallest state has the same voting power as the largest. The question was something more than one of mere procedure. The Congress had for its principal object the discussion of a proposal for a universal strike, and the British delegates feared that if the vote was taken by nationalities, the delegates of the smaller states, who represented a comparatively small number of miners by no means thoroughly organized, might drag the miners in other states into a policy they could not approve. Eventually it was agreed to postpone the final settlement of the question.

The resolution in favour of a universal strike before the 1st May was proposed by the Belgians. To the surprise of the British delegates it was found that the greatest possible difference of opinion existed on the subject. M. Basly and Herr Schröder opposed it from the point of view of the French and German miners respectively. The suggestion

that the strike should be utilized in order to secure an eight hours working day, secured the support of the delegates of some of the largest English unions. M. Defnet, the most prominent of the Belgian representatives, proposed that the Congress should affirm the necessity of a universal strike for an eight hours day, without however fixing any date for such strike; that the governments of Europe should be called upon to establish such a day by convention; and that the International Committee should be instructed to take steps to inaugurate such a strike, unless the governments within a reasonable time endeavoured to arrange such a convention. Mr. John Wilson, M.P., moved an amendment to the effect that the Congress, whilst recognizing the desirability of shorter hours of labour, was of opinion that the best way to secure such reform was not by strikes or by legislation, but by organization and mutual arrangement between employers and workmen. This amendment received only seven votes, and M. Defnet's resolution was carried, the delegates from Northumberland and Durham voting against it.

A committee was afterwards appointed to prepare a draft constitution, such draft to be submitted to the miners in each country for confirmation, modification, or rejection.

In criticizing the work of the Congress, it must be remembered that it was a second successful attempt to bring together the Continental and British miners. The impression left on the minds of the English delegates was that there is a great field on the Continent for the organization of labour. 'A great impulse,' writes one of the English delegates, 'has been given to trade unionism on the Continent. The Belgian, still more the German, delegates were warm in their expressions of gratitude for the help rendered to them in their efforts to organize the miners by the encouragement given through these Congresses. They were almost pathetic in their appeals for the maintenance of a connection as close and a co-operation as hearty as possible between themselves and the miners of Great Britain.' On the question of voting great tension existed, but the fact that good feeling always prevailed, and that the delegates separated eager to meet again, augurs well for the success of future gatherings.

A Report of the business transacted at the Congress has been edited by Mr. Benjamin Pickard, the general secretary.

J. E. C. MUNRO.

REPORTS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BUREAU OF STATISTICS OF LABOUR ON WORKING WOMEN, 1870-1889

THE Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour has from the first year of its establishment paid special attention to the conditions of working-women. The first annual report issued in 1870, although containing little statistical information, gives evidence of individual operatives which throws considerable light on the working of the factory system at the time. The reports of 1871, 1872, and 1884, each contain the results of inquiries as to women's labour in Boston, the inquiry of 1872 being extended in scope so as to include the whole of Massachusetts. The sixth annual report deals with 'the special effects of certain forms of employment upon female health,' and in an examination of the condition of working-men's families, gives, amongst other