

THE MINERS' NEXT STEP was first published in 1912.
The original document is reprinted here, along
with a new introduction by miner David Douglass.

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THE MINERS' NEXT STEP

Being a Suggested Scheme for the
Reorganisation of the Federation.

Issued by the Unofficial Reform Committee.



TONYPANDY:
ROBERT DAVIES AND CO., GENERAL PRINTERS, ETC.

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1912.

INTRODUCTION

The Miners' Next Step was never intended to be a historical masterpiece nor some monument to syndicalist theory, it was essentially a short sharp tactical pamphlet aimed at a particular moment of history. That it has survived, and with this republication will be once more read by another generation of activists, is in some ways remarkable. Almost certainly this is so because of the outrage it produced at the time, The Western Mail and The Times seen in it the clarion call of anarchy, others pointed to it as clear proof just how far to the left many of the miners had gone. For others the pamphlet became the exception to prove the rule, that the British working class, the miners included, did not embrace syndicalist ideology. The truth is, that although political Industrial Unionism was a dominant idea among the miners, the miners' associations and federations were always industrial unions per se, political Anarcho-Syndicalism expressed by working class people of themselves and for themselves, as it is in this pamphlet, was rare. That the pamphlet was widely acclaimed by the South Wales miners shows to what extent the small syndicalist caucus had its finger on the pulse of the miners' movement.

The pamphlet was the work of the "unofficial reform committee". It sets its sights firstly to contribute to the debate and process of reorganisation of the South Wales Miners' Federation following the turbulent and often violent years of 1912 and before. It sought to challenge the policy of arbitration following failure to agree via conciliation. It sees this earlier policy as systemised betrayal of clear class distinction, a joint measure to control the miners by use of their own organisation. But it also challenged the tactics employed by the lodges and the federation as a whole, when strikes and wholesale stoppages were afoot. The authors felt the all out strike tactic was often

wasteful and too costly to those who had to sustain and endure the stoppage, a more tactical and skilful use of the strike together with imaginative use of other work restrictions was proposed. In terms of industrial organisation the plan outlines two things, one is wresting control of direction and means from the executive and the leadership and keeping it in the lodges and among the rank and file. The other is to draft a framework which take the union through the phase of class war with capitalism, but also provide the organisational shape necessary for the workers' takeover and administration of the mines. At this time the model so famed by the IWW and its British exponents was equally accepted by the revolutionary Marxists (particularly those around the Socialist Labour Party) as by the Anarcho-Syndicalists, both claimed and hailed the Industrial Union as a method of fighting capitalism and of laying the shape for a future workers' society. The difference between them was that the SLP and the Marxists believed in the dictatorship by the proletariat (and the construction of a workers' state), the Anarcho-Syndicalists wished nothing to do with any state, "workers" or otherwise.

So the pamphlet, small though it was, chose its targets well and aimed a few well chosen paragraph plans at them, the whole gamut of the problems confronting the miners and their lives at work and in the union and their aspirations for a better world was thus addressed.

It was produced and then sent to as many progressives and left wingers and class conscious workers of all descriptions who would be likely to seize on it and use it in the debate on the reorganisation of the South Wales Miners' Federation.

It is quite clear the pamphlet served as a centralising force for otherwise divergent strands within the miners' ranks. After doing the rounds of the valleys it was used as the basis for an unofficial organisational conference in Cardiff. The bourgeoisie and their executive in Westminster thought that if the wolf wasn't exactly at

the door, he was now in the neighbourhood, they gave it unintended publicity in the House of Commons debate on the Minimum Wages Bill.² They were so concerned they called a special debate just on the subject of the pamphlet and in so doing actually added to its reputation as the watchword of rebellion, though actually it is couched in quite moderate and reasonable language.

What is essentially different about this publication and say left wing pamphlets and publications aimed at the miners today, is that this publication was of the miners themselves. It was essentially a constructive document, it aims at building and defending the miners' organisation. It does not, as many ultra leftist groups of today do, stand outside the miners' organisation bellowing in, still less does it call for the sweeping away of the miners' union, per se. It is offered as a contribution to a debate being engaged in by mining activists, it is at once part of that movement and not apart from that movement, either physically or politically. After saying that, it must be said that it arose from widespread discontent with the union's structure, its bureaucratic autocracy, lack of serious understanding of the nature of class society by the then miners' leadership. As such its central thrust is against The Conciliation Scheme, an established process of dispute regulation established jointly by the Miners' Federation and the coal owners. The owners had been forced to accept, and in part devise the scheme, in order to minimise the widespread wild cat actions endemic in most British coalfields. The union leadership for their part had likewise sought to control the "unofficial" and "illegal" stoppages in order to safeguard the union and negotiated agreements and terms. The pamphlet demonstrates the limits of such agreements and the dangers of seeing them as ends in themselves. But what it does not do, is to argue that no improvements or advances can be fought for and won this side of the revolution. This conclusion would have been obvious to the authors who as coal miners themselves would never damn their hopes of better conditions to

some great final day of reckoning. In this it is the eminently practical reasonableness of the pamphlet which is disarming to many, otherwise bred on a diet of out of this world "jam tomorrow" utopianism.

V. L. Allen the Marxist historian in his concise paragraph on The Miners' Next Step argues "Almost all of its proposals remain unfulfilled. . . ." I see it differently, I believe most of the concepts for union organisation for defence and extension of the miners' industrial union were absorbed by the developing miners' unions and in particular the NUM. This very pamphlet was republished by the South Wales Area of the NUM in the 60s as a gesture of pride and as an act endorsing its legitimate place in the history of the South Wales Miners.

It is ironic that this pamphlet is republished at a time when the miners' union is again wracked by the aftermath of punishing class war, media and ruling class hostility, decimation of the mining industry and internal conflict over methods of restructuring the union, whether to or not to, or even to wind up the union altogether and accept absorption into the all suffocating embrace of the TGWU. In this context much of the proposed programme put forward in this pamphlet is still relevant. Certainly it is now national policy for the winding up of Area constituencies of the union. For the building of a single national union based upon the lodges, meeting monthly from all parts of the island, represented by one delegate per lodge, elected by ballot and subject to re-election and recall, the National Executive Committee likewise is chosen by individual ballot vote, subject to bi-annual election, and as the areas gradually fold up, are destined to be comprised of fewer and fewer full time officials. The demand for one union covering all miners and quarry workers is one very much needed today, and in particular the urgent need to recruit open cast miners and miners working in the myriad of small licensed mines which are springing up all over Scotland, Geordieland and Wales.

The recognition of the miners' union as an industrial union "for all workers in or above the mine no matter what his craft or occupation" is as vital now as it was then, perhaps more so, as the current leadership obsessed with numbers games and maintenance of offices and functions seem determined to frog-march us into the general union TGWU. Whilst this would certainly preserve the bureaucracy the identity, history and combativeness of the miners tried and tested for two centuries in an industrial union would equally certainly be stifled or die of apathy and indifference.

The clarity of tactics displayed in this work could certainly be of help now; whereas The Miners' Next Step proposes a plan of yearly targets, for example first a wage increase, then an hour's reduction, current miners' conferences yearly pass shopping lists of (quite justifiable) demands, but which without priority or tactical consideration remain simply pious resolutions of intent without means or real intention of achieving them.

IN CONCLUSION

This work maintains its clarity of purpose even today though the impact of its careful formulation and presentation will not be fully appreciated except in the context to which I've put it. Its fame ensured its gradual absorption into many features which shaped the development of the miners' union and their political outlook. It is important to realise that whereas The Miners' Next Step criticises standard responses to situations, eg always walking off the job, their own suggestion of "work to rules" or restriction of output are also not carved in granite, and the employers through the current Employment Act have sought to block all of those forms of action also. The class war is a dynamic, there is no set of tactics suitable for all situations, the nature of the struggle, the employers' weak spots, the best plan forward will always be determined by the men and women at the point of

production because they know it best. Certainly those who have come to mock us by selling the newspaper The Next Step not only do not know what that will be, they won't know until after the working class have already taken the step for themselves and as such will have no need to buy a paper explaining it.

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BRANCH DELEGATE, HATFIELD COLLIERY
DONCASTER, JUNE 1991

Footnotes

¹ The pamphlet was written among others by Noah Ablett (one of the Ruskin strikers of 1909), C. L. Gibbons, W. H. Mainwaring, Noah Rees, George Dolling and Will Hay.

² The miners had opposed this bill, which although supposedly there to protect them from below starvation wages, was not an absolute rule but was so conditional and subject to exceptions the owners could virtually ignore it.

³ The Militancy of the British Miners, V. L. Allen, The Moor Press 1981, chapter 20, 2nd paragraph.

FOREWORD

A few words are necessary to explain how this pamphlet came to be written. All the suggestions in the preamble, programme, constitution, and policy have been sent from one lodge or another, through their districts to the Executive of the South Wales Miners' Federation. The Executive appointed a sub-committee to sit on them and draft out a programme. This programme was submitted to the Federation "Reform" Conference in March, 1911. It consisted of a recommendation to increase the contribution to 2/- per month, and a very worthless and highly bureaucratic scheme of centralization. The people responsible for the resolutions from the lodges realized that it was hopeless to expect any reform from that quarter, and in the course of time, they got together and held meetings in every part of the coalfield. The net results of these meetings are contained in the two following resolutions:

I Realizing that no one lodge or district can be expected to devote sufficient time to work out the details of such a comprehensive scheme as the reorganization of the Federation, this meeting decides to give up its time to organise sections in every part of the coalfield for the purpose of taking on this highly essential work.

II That a draft of our proposals be sent to each section in Monmouthshire Eastern and Western Valleys, Swansea and district, Merthyr and Aberdare and district, and the Rhondda districts. That they be asked to sit, deliberate, and suggest improvements; hold a series of joint meetings; and eventually to meet in conference at Cardiff, to submit their findings, and to abide by the decisions the Conference will arrive at.

For the last four or five months this has been done. Hundreds of men (trade union officials, executive

members, and workmen) have given up their time and money to this work. It was soon realized that an explanatory statement was necessary to accompany our proposals, and so this pamphlet was written. No name appears on the pamphlet, as it is not the work of any one man, but if it is criticized as it ought to be, and no doubt will be, there will be no lack of men to take up its defence. We venture to think this is a record for a democratic work of an entirely voluntary character.

In conclusion, let us again emphasise, as it is emphasised in the pamphlet, that this work is not offered as a hard and fast, or dogmatic scheme, which the workmen must accept. It is offered in the spirit of brotherhood, as a guide to the workmen, in the necessary work of putting their house in order. Hundreds of men all over the coalfield stretch out their hands to the workmen and say:- "Here is the best product of our time and thought, which we freely offer as an expression of our oneness of heart and interest as a section of the working class. Do what you will with it, modify, or (we hope) improve, but at least give it your earnest consideration."

CHAPTER I

OLD POLICY OUTWORN

The present policy of the Federation since 1900, may be called the Conciliation policy. We have to briefly examine its usefulness as a wage getting policy, for that is the best and the only real test of any policy.

HAS CONCILIATION SECURED WAGES?

From the year 1900 there has been an enormous increase in the price of coal, averaging nearly 6/- per ton. This would have in itself automatically secured for us 60% on the standard, whereas we are only paid 50%. The argument may be used that our policy of minimum percentages has kept the price of coal up. This is sheer bunkum. Here are two reasons sufficient to dispell that illusion. The owners are more concerned to sell all their coal than to get exceptional prices for some of it. To put it in a glaring way, if they can sell 20 tons at 15/- per ton, and only 10 tons at 20/- per ton, they will prefer to sell the 20 tons at 15/-, because it puts more money in their pockets, and they will be called upon to pay less out in wages. The second reason which also amplifies the first, is that competition, and not the sweet will of the owners, fixes the price of coal. If it were not for this fact the owners would be foolish to wait for our minimum percentages before increasing the price of their coal, and so putting huge profits in their pockets. They love profits too well to wait for us to compel them to accept them. No! No! they charge the highest penny that American and German competition will allow them. If they put a higher price on their coal to-morrow they will sell less than to-day. This is surely quite obvious. The price of coal has increased from the same cause that has increased all other goods, namely the cheapening of gold through richer yields and labour saving appliances.

Dismissing then the illusion that our policy has kept up prices, how are to account for the 10% reduction we have suffered? By the facts, and here they are. When Sir David Dale gave his award in 1902, he increased the price which was the equivalent of 30% (under the Sliding Scale) from 11/3 to 11/10. A direct reduction of over 5% in all our standard rates. There goes one Chunk. When the last agreement (1910) was arrived at we allowed 9d per ton over 14/- to be free from percentages. There goes another 6% (?) reduction. These are facts. It is a fact (from reasons we have already explained) that the price of coal has never gone down to 11s. 10d. since the great (?) principle of minimum percentage was established. Thus, while we were clapping our hands in enthusiastic joy over the securing of a great principle the employers were quietly pocketing the 5% proceeds. This is a distinct feature of our recent reductions. The other serious reduction was granted on grounds, that if logically carried out, would mean the final end of progress, and the commencement of a battledore and shuttlecock game, of changing the persons to whom we were paying our reductions. The owners said that the cost of legislative reforms had increased the cost of production. So we relieved them to the extent of 9d. on the ton after 14/-, i.e. 6%. This means that if we get any improvements, we must pay for them. We can go on like this for centuries securing great principles and legislative reforms, while all the time our pockets grow emptier. This is a fiendish principle that no sane man can countenance. Yet these are facts. That is one part of our indictment against the policy of conciliation.

Space prevents us from going into exhaustive detail as to the "tying up" and "delay" character of conciliation. But they are so well known, that it is superfluous really to detail them. We shall briefly summarize our objections. First the process.

DELAY

A dispute occurs in a colliery. The ordinary lodge negotiations are carried on, resulting in failure. The

Agent is called in. Still failure. The matter is sent to the Executive and finally the Board. Here it takes its place with other matters on the agenda. In the course of time, after some months of waiting, it is reached and brought up for discussion. It is then referred to a sub-committee. These take time to see the management, and the colliery. Then they negotiate. Sometimes, as in the case of Rhymney, they negotiate for two years. Even then the owner's side refuse to report failure to agree. Eventually this may be done. Then, and then only, the colliery may give a month's notice. Need we say anything more in condemnation of this? We think not.

BASIS OF CONSIDERATION

On the Board all things have to be considered from the employers' standpoint. They alone have the inside information. We don't audit their books, and we have no means of judging the truth of their assertions. They say the colliery won't pay. We must accept their word. When we are considering principles, they have only to show that some wretched little colliery employing 10 men will have to close if we insist on our demands. That silences us. The little colliery belongs to a method of production that is almost a century old. Yet we must allow their conditions to govern us. Reason in such a case means, in plain English: the Employers' interest and outlook. After 10 years of such a game, we find our customs broken down, and our price lists a farce, and in the face of a very serious rise in the cost of living (which many of us have nick-named prosperity) we have been reduced 10% in the standard rates. Is this enough?

CONCILIATION AND LEADERS

Here is perhaps after all our strongest indictment. The policy of "collective bargaining" will be dealt with later on. But we have here to point out why there is discontent with "leaders." The policy of conciliation gives the real power of the men into the hands of a few

leaders. Somebody says "What about conferences and ballots"? Conferences are only called, and ballots only taken when there is a difference of opinion between leaders. The conference or ballot is only a referee. Can this be denied? In the main, and on things that matter, the Executive have the supreme power. The workmen for a time look up to these men and when things are going well they idolise them. The employers respect them. Why? Because they have the men - the real power - in the hollow of their hands. They, the leaders, become "gentlemen," they become M.P.'s, and have considerable social prestige because of this power. Now when any man or men assume power of this description, we have a right to ask them to be infallible. That is the penalty, a just one too, of autocracy. When things go wrong, and we have shown that they have gone wrong, they deserve to be, and are blamed. What really is blameworthy, is the conciliation policy which demands leaders of this description. For a moment let us look at this question from the leaders' standpoint. First, they are "trade unionists by trade" and their profession demands certain privileges. The greatest of all these are plenary powers. Now, every inroad the rank and file make on this privilege lessens the power and prestige of the leader. Can we wonder then that leaders are averse to change? Can we wonder that they try and prevent progress? Progress may arrive at such a point that they would not be able to retain their "jobs," or their "jobs" would become so unimportant that from their point of view, they would not be worth retaining. The leader then has an interest - a vested interest - in stopping progress. They have therefore in some things an antagonism of interests with the rank and file. The conditions of things in South Wales has reached the point when this difference of interest, this antagonism, has become manifest. Hence the men criticise and are discontented with their leaders. But the remedy is not new leaders. But - well, we shall see.

CHAPTER II

The year 1910 brought a seeming realization of this antagonism by the men. Throughout the negotiations for the new agreement, the men continuously insisted, more and more on having the controlling voice. Early on it was laid down that plenary powers should not be given to the leaders, but that the final acceptance of any agreement should depend upon the ballot vote of the men.

Thus an entirely new principle was established, which took away from the Leaders all responsibility for the terms of the agreement, and left only the responsibility for the conduct of the negotiations.

This, while representing an advance, is by no means a satisfactory solution. It places the men in the position of a crowd at a football match. The players, selected by the crowd have to outmanoeuvre their opponents, while the crowd either cheer or criticize their efforts. But of real control, save in the matter of selecting the players, the crowd have none.

This half-hearted establishment of the principle of direct control by the men found expression again towards the end of the year by the outbreak of the Cambrian and Aberdare disputes. A careful and dispassionate survey of these historic struggles, will show that at every stage, the interference of Leaders prejudiced the case for the men, and also helped to tie their hands in their endeavour to settle the disputes themselves.

To the Leaders, everything seemed to be in the melting pot, because the men insisted on taking a hand in the conduct of affairs. There was much vain talk on the Leaders' side about "the growing spirit of anarchy," which was bringing "chaos" into the coalfield. And on the men's side, a growing distrust of leadership, and a determination to gain more control.

We had reached the half-way house between two methods of administration, each of which negatived and stultified the other. To-day we begin to realize that it is impossible to combine the two methods; and signs are not wanting to show that if measures are not taken to crystallize the new spirit, to give it proper methods in which to function, we shall drift back to the old methods of autocracy.

It becomes necessary then to devise means which will enable this new spirit of real democratic control to manifest itself. Which will not only enable the men, but which will encourage, nay compel them, to take the supreme control of their own organisation.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OLD AND NEW

So long as the system of working for wages endures, collective bargaining remains essential. From the men's side we cannot permit individual bargains to be made. Such individual bargains have a tendency to debase wages and conditions. On the employers' side there is no great desire for change in this matter. As will be seen by recent speeches by Mr. D. A. Thomas and Lord Merthyr, they realize its value, in its present form, to them. They have no time to bother with individuals, but prefer to purchase their labour power in bulk, on an agreed schedule. On the men's side, however, it is being realized, that collective bargaining can be made so wide reaching and all embracing, that it includes the whole of the working class. In this form the employers and the old school of labour leaders have no love for it. The employers, because they realize its dangers to their profits. The labour leaders, because it will degrade their power and influence by necessitating a much more stringent and effective democratic control than at present obtains. Let us, in order to clearly realize this, examine at close quarters the labour leader and his functions.

ARE LEADERS GOOD AND NECESSARY?

This is not a double question, since if leaders are necessary, they are perforce good. Let us then examine the leader, and see if he is necessary. A leader implies at the outset some men who are being led; and the term is used to describe a man who, in a representative capacity, has acquired combined administrative and legislative power. As such, he sees no need for any high level of intelligence in the rank and file, except to applaud his actions. Indeed such intelligence from his point of view, by breeding criticism and opposition, is an obstacle and causes confusion. His motto is, "Men, be loyal to your leaders." His logical basis: Plenary powers. His social and economic prestige, is dependent upon his being respected by "the public" and the employers. These are the three principles which form the platform upon which the leader stands. He presents, in common with other institutions, a good and a bad aspect.

THE GOOD SIDE OF LEADERSHIP.

1. - Leadership tends to efficiency
One decided man, who knows his own mind is stronger than a hesitating crowd. It takes time for a number of people to agree upon a given policy. One man soon makes up his mind.
2. - He takes all responsibility.
As a responsible leader, he knows that his advice is almost equivalent to a command, and this ensures that his advice will have been carefully and gravely considered before being tendered.
3. - He stands for Order and System.
All too frequently, "What is everybody's business is nobody's business," and if no one stands in a position to ensure order and system, many things are omitted which will cause the men's interest to suffer.

4. - He affords a standard of goodness and ability.

In the sphere of public usefulness there is a great field of emulation. The good wishes of the masses can only be obtained by new aspirants for office showing a higher status of ability than the then existing leaders. This leads to his continued efficiency or elimination.

5. - His faithfulness and honesty are guarded.

Hero worship has great attractions for the hero, and a leader has great inducements on this side, apart from pecuniary considerations to remain faithful and honest.

THE BAD SIDE OF LEADERSHIP.

1. - Leadership implies power.

Leadership implies power held by the Leader. Without power the leader is inept. The possession of power inevitably leads to corruption. All leaders become corrupt, in spite of their own good intentions. No man was ever good enough, brave enough, or strong enough, to have such power at his disposal, as real leadership implies.

2. - Consider what it means.

This power of initiative, this sense of responsibility, the self respect which comes from expressed manhood, is taken from the men, and consolidated in the leader. The sum of their initiative, their responsibility, their self-respect becomes his.

3. - The order and system.

The order and system he maintains, is based upon the suppression of the men, from being independent thinkers into being "the men" or "the mob." Every argument which could be advanced to justify leadership on this score, would apply equally well to the Czar of all the Russias and his policy of repression. In order to be effective, the leader must keep the men in order, or he forfeits the respect of the employers and "the public," and thus becomes ineffective as a leader.

4. - He corrupts the aspirants to public usefulness.

He is compelled in order to maintain his power, to see to it that only those, who are willing to act as his drill sergeants or coercive agents shall enjoy his patronage. In a word, he is compelled to become an autocrat and a foe to democracy.

5. - He prevents solidarity.

Sheep cannot be said to have solidarity. In obedience to a shepherd, they will go up or down, backwards or forwards as they are driven by him and his dogs. But they have no solidarity, for that means unity and loyalty. Unity and loyalty, not to an individual, or the policy of an individual, but to an interest and a policy which is understood and worked for by all.

Finally he prevents the legislative power of the workers.

An industrial vote will affect the lives and happiness of workmen far more than a political vote. The power to vote whether there shall or shall not be a strike, or upon an industrial policy to be pursued by his union, will affect far more important issues to the workman's life, than the political vote can ever touch. Hence it should be more sought after, and its privileges jealously guarded. Think of the tremendous power going to waste because of leadership, of the inevitable stop-block he becomes on progress, because quite naturally, leaders examine every new proposal, and ask first how it will affect their position and power. It prevents large and comprehensive policies being initiated and carried out, which depend upon the understanding and watchfulness of the great majority. National strikes and policies, can only be carried out, when the bulk of the people see their necessity, and themselves prepare and arrange them.

CHAPTER III

WORKMEN THE "BOSSSES," "LEADERS" THE SERVANTS

Is it possible to devise such an organization as will bring the above from the ideal to the realm of practicability? Those responsible for this pamphlet, men who, residing in all parts of South Wales, have given their time and thought to this problem, answer confidently in the affirmative. In these chapters they present their scheme, believing it to be not only possible, but the only practicable form of organization for us to achieve. It is divided into four parts, each of which depends upon the other. They are, the Preamble, which summarizes the needs and indicates the requirements of such an organization. The Programme, which states the objective - immediate and ultimate. The Constitution, which gives the framework in which the real worker's organization shall move, and the policy which illustrates the spirit and tactics of that organization. A careful reading of this chapter will place our scheme squarely and simply before you. Bear in mind when reading and discussing it, the faults and failures of the old form of organization, the abortiveness of all up to the present suggested improvements; and endeavour to realize, as we have done, that a complete alteration in the structure and policy of the organization is imperative.

PREAMBLE TO MANIFESTO.

The present deplorable condition of the South Wales Miners' Federation calls imperatively for a summary of the situation, in an endeavour to discover where we stand.

The rapidity of industrial development is forcing the Federation to take action along lines for which there exists no machinery to properly carry out.

The control of the organization by the rank and file is far too indirect.

The system of long agreements, with their elaborate precautions against direct action, cramp the free expression of the might of the workmen and prevent the securing of improved conditions, often when the mere exhibition of their strength would allow of it.

The sectional character of the organization in the mining industry renders concerted action almost impossible, and thus every section helps to hinder and often defeat the other. What then is necessary to remedy the present evils?

PREAMBLE.

I. - A united industrial organization, which, recognising the war of interest between workers and employers, is constructed on fighting lines, allowing for a rapid and simultaneous stoppage of wheels throughout the mining industry.

II. - A constitution giving free and rapid control by the rank and file acting in such a way that conditions will be unified throughout the coalfield; so that pressure at one point would automatically affect all others and thus readily command united action and resistance.

III. - A programme of a wide and evolutionary working class character, admitting and encouraging sympathetic action with other sections of the workers.

IV. - A policy which will compel the prompt and persistent use of the utmost ounce of strength, to ensure that the conditions of the workmen shall always be as good as it is possible for them to be under the then existing circumstances.

We have endeavoured to suggest methods whereby such an organization might be formed. Appended will be found our

draft proposals. We simply ask that they may receive your earnest consideration, even if you think that they do not entirely fit the present situation. We feel sure that they contain suggestions that will help in the solution of some of our most pressing problems.

Comment on Preamble.

This surely explains itself. If anyone disagrees with this, then the scheme itself will be condemned by him. While on the contrary everything in the scheme is contained, in germ, in this Preamble.

PROGRAMME

Ultimate Objective.

One organization to cover the whole of the Coal, Ore, Slate, Stone, Clay, Salt, mining or quarrying industry of Great Britain, with one Central Executive.

That as a step to the attainment of that ideal, strenuous efforts be made to weld all National, County, or District Federations, at present comprising the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, into one compact organization with one Central Executive, whose province it shall be to negotiate agreements and other matters requiring common action. That a cardinal principle of that organization to be: that every man working in or about the mine, no matter what his craft or occupation - provisions having been made for representation on the Executive - be required to both join and observe its decisions.

IMMEDIATE STEPS - INDUSTRIAL

I. - That a minimum wage of 8/- per day, for all workmen employed in or about the mines, constitute a demand to be striven for nationally at once.

II. - That subject to the foregoing having been obtained, we demand and use our power to obtain a 7 hour day.

PROGRAMME - POLITICAL

That the organization shall engage in political action, both local and national, on the basis of complete independence of, and hostility to all capitalist parties, with an avowed policy of wresting whatever advantage it can for the working class.

In the event of any representative of the organization losing his seat, he shall be entitled to, and receive, the full protection of the organization against victimization.

GENERAL

Alliances to be formed, and trades organizations fostered, with a view to steps being taken, to amalgamate all workers into one National and International union, to work for the taking over of all industries, by the workmen themselves.

The Programme is very comprehensive, because it deals with immediate objects, as well as ultimate aims. We must have our desired end in view all the time, in order to test new proposals and policies, to see whether they tend in that direction or not. For example, the working class, if it is to fight effectually, must be an army, not a mob. It must be classified, regimented and brigaded, along the lines indicated by the product. Thus, all miners, &c., have this in common, they delve in the earth to produce the minerals, ores, gems, salt, stone, &c., which form the basis of raw material for all other industries. Similarly the Railwaymen, Dockers, Seamen, Carters, etc., form the transport industry. Therefore, before an organized and self-disciplined working class can achieve its emancipation, it must coalesce on these lines.

It will be noticed that nothing is said about Conciliation Boards or Wages Agreements. The first two chapters will, however, have shown you that Conciliation Boards and Wages Agreements only lead us into a morass.

As will be seen when perusing the policy and constitution, the suggested organization is constructed to fight rather than to negotiate. It is based on the principle that we can only get what we are strong enough to win and retain.

The great merit of the minimum wage, is that it makes conciliation unnecessary. A man either receives the minimum or he does not. There is nothing to conciliate or negotiate upon. There is further in the minimum wage two diverse tendencies. On the men's side it will tend, as the organization develops its power, for the minimum to be so increased as to become the maximum possible to be earned on the price lists. On the employers' side, the tendency will perforce always be to offer some inducement to the men, to earn something above the minimum, in order to expedite production and thus maintain profits.

There is little need to dilate upon the proposal for a seven-hour day, conditional as it is upon the minimum wage being obtained. To those, however, who would still be earning (on the price list) wages above the minimum, it may be pointed out that this would supply the necessary stimulus for further increases in the minimum. Reductions of hours have always antedated increases in wages. The operation of the Eight Hours Act will supply an instance. This present struggle for a minimum wage is a direct outcome of that Act.

Political action must go on side by side with industrial action. Such measures as the Mines Bill, Workmen's Compensation Acts, proposals for nationalising the Mines, etc., demand the presence in Parliament of men who directly represent, and are amenable to, the wishes and instructions of the workmen. While, the eagerness of Governments, to become a bludgeoning bully on behalf of the employers, could be somewhat restrained by the presence of men who were prepared to act in a courageous fashion.

CHAPTER IV CONSTITUTION

I. - The organization shall be called the "South Wales Miners' Industrial Organization."

Its registered office shall be as Conference decides.

II. - The organization shall be composed of all workers engaged in, or connected with, the mining industry.

III. - All power of legislation shall remain in the hands of the members, through the lodge and the ballot vote.

IV. - The Funds and administration of the organization shall be centralised, except in so far as is hereinafter provided for.

V. - The administration of the organization shall be vested in the hands of one Central Executive Council, who shall be elected annually by ballot vote of the members. The method of election to be determined by a conference called for that purpose.

VI. - No agent or other permanent official of the Federation, shall be eligible to a seat on the Executive Council.

VII. - The President and Vice-President shall be elected by the Executive Council, from amongst its own members. No person shall hold the office of President for more than two years in succession.

VIII. - Executive Council Meetings shall be held every four weeks, oftener if necessary.

IX. - A Joint Delegate Conference of all the Lodges in the organization shall be held monthly, oftener if occasion demands. Conferences to be held alternatively at Cardiff and Swansea. (No new price lists shall be adopted, until formally sanctioned by such Conference).

X. - All agents to be deemed equal in status and paid at similar rates, their duties to be directed from Centre.

XI. - Any agent who may be returned a member to Parliament, shall be required to relinquish his industrial duties and position.

XII. - No member of Parliament shall be eligible to seek for or retain a seat on a local or National Executive Council.

XIII. - They shall attend, when requested, meetings of such executive in an advisory capacity.

XIV. - On all proposed labour legislation Conferences shall be called to discuss same and instruct our M. P. s.

XV. - Any member of Parliament, as such under the auspices of the organization, shall at once vacate his seat if a ballot vote of the membership so decides.

CONTRIBUTIONS.

XVI. - 1/- per adult member per lunar month, 8d. of which is to go direct to Central Fund, and 4d. to be retained in the Lodge to defray Lodge expenses, and form a local fund.

The Constitution provides the corner-stone of the whole scheme; here is the machinery for a real democratic organization. let us examine the principles embodied in it.

I. - The Lodges have supreme control. - All the initiative for new proposals, policies and tactics,

remains with the Lodge. Nothing becomes law in the organization unless it receives the sanction of the Lodges, or a ballot vote of the coalfield.

II. - The Executive becomes unofficial. - As has been shown before, democracy becomes impossible, when officials or leaders dominate. For this reason they are excluded from all power on the Executive, which becomes a purely administrative body; comprised of men directly elected by the men for that purpose.

III. - Agents or organizers become the servants of the men, directly under the control of the Executive, and indirectly under the control of the men.

An example.

To illustrate the working by a given case, we will take a dispute at a certain colliery. A seam has been opened out, and the employers wish to have a price list fixed upon it. The men consult and decide either to continue working it upon the basis of the minimum wage, or draft a price list which they consider will be of advantage to them. The Executive take up the conduct of the negotiations, only when the Lodge has failed locally, or at their request. They have no power to vary the demands of the men. An agent is sent who will have all information relating to this particular seam, and who will be able to detail what conditions obtain in connection with it elsewhere. If he is, as he should be, an expert in negotiation, he obtains the utmost the employers are prepared to concede. If this is satisfactory to the men, well and good, if not he reports back to the Executive, who, in conjunction with the Conference decide what action shall be taken. Thus the workmen decide the principle, the Executive carry it out. The agent provides information and negotiates. The Conference finally ratifies or disapproves.

Its effects on Strikes.

The effect of the Constitution would abolish sectional strikes. All questions become, under this system, either question of principle, which we are prepared to fight

with the whole strength of our organization, or questions which should be fought locally. We cannot afford to use a steam hammer to crack a nut. Grievances are not questions with us so much of numbers as of principles. It might, and probably would be, deemed advisable to have a strike of the whole organization to defend one man from victimisation, or an infraction of the minimum. To-day we can see strikes caused by petty issues which in themselves involve no question of principle, yet throw idle large numbers of men. We must learn to conserve our strength and conduct our fights on principles, not arithmetic. The 5% clause which now obtains is a ridiculous absurdity.

Its effect on Solidarity.

The unity of conditions that must necessarily follow, makes solidarity a necessary sequence. The enjoyment of benefits derived from association, makes an atmosphere in which non-unionism cannot live. All of which means the raising the tone of the discussions in the Lodge to questions of wide scope. A sense of responsibility, and a recognition, that the Lodge meetings are the place where things are really done, together with a realization of the importance of the issues involved, will make the Lodges centres of keen and pulsating life, sensitive and responsive organs of a great organization.

It will raise the Status of the Workers.

By giving them real powers in the Lodge room. It will stimulate every available ounce of intellect to work full pressure. There the workers will learn to legislate for themselves on matters which touch them most closely. This will ensure the organization working all the time, in getting the best possible obtainable conditions.

CHAPTER V

POLICY

- I. - The old policy of identity of interest between employers and ourselves be abolished, and a policy of open hostility installed.
- II. - No dispute shall be considered by the Executive Council until after failure is reported by the Lodge affected.
- III. - Lodges failing to settle disputes arising in their respective collieries, must immediately report the same to the Secretary, together with all information relative to the cause, and subsequent conduct of the fight.
- IV. - The Secretary on receipt of such information, must immediately call on the services of an Agent, the three parties to consult together, with a view of arriving at a policy mutually agreeable.
- V. - Failing mutual agreement on a policy, the Lodge must be allowed to carry out their own, or the one favoured by them, until rescinded or altered by a Conference, whose decision must be final.
- VI. - Any dispute not settled within 14 days after its report to the Executive Council, the Council to have power to call a special conference to deal with the same.
- VII. - Any Lodge desiring to bring any grievance before a Conference, which has not been reported in the usual way, must first receive the sanction of the Business Committee, who must have due regard to its importance.
- VIII. - For the purpose of giving greater strength to Lodges, they be encouraged to join together to form Joint Committees, and to hold joint meetings.
- IX. - These Committees to have power to initiate, and carry out any policy within their own area, unhampered by Agent or Executive Council, so long as they act within their own financial resources.
- X. - Lodges should, as far as possible, discard the old method of coming out on strike for any little minor grievance. And adopt the more scientific weapon of the

irritation strike by simply remaining at work, reducing their output, and so contrive by their general conduct to make the colliery unremunerative.

XI. - Whenever it is contemplated bringing any body of men out on strike, demands must be put forward to improve the status of each section so brought out.

XII. - Victimization of all forms, whether persecuted by being prevented from obtaining work, or prosecution in the courts, to be strenuously resisted, even to the extent of National Action.

XIII. - That a continual agitation be carried on in favour of increasing the minimum wage, and shortening the hours of work, until we have extracted the whole of the employers' profits.

XIV. - That our objective be, to build up an organization, that will ultimately take over the mining industry, and carry it on in the interests of the workers.

It will be seen that the policy is extremely drastic and militant in its character, and it is important that this should be so. No statement of principles, however wide, embracing no programme however widely desired, and shrewdly planned; no constitution, however admirable in its structure, can be of any avail, unless the whole is quickened and animated by that, which will give it the breath of life - a militant aggressive policy. For this reason our examination of the policy must be minute and searching. The main principles are as follows:-

Decentralization for Negotiating.

The Lodges, it will be seen, take all effective control of affairs, as long as there is any utility in local negotiations. With such a policy, Lodges become responsible and self-reliant units, with every stimulus to work out their own local salvation in their own way.

Centralization for Fighting.

It will be noticed that all questions are ensured a rapid settlement. So soon as the Lodge finds itself at the end its resources, the whole fighting strength of the organization is turned on. We thus reverse the present order of things, where in the main, we

centralize our negotiations and sectionalize our fighting.

They will loudly cry for this in our own interests, and must strenuously oppose this in our own interests.

The use of the Irritation Strike.

Pending the publication of a pamphlet, which will deal in a comprehensive and orderly way, with different methods and ways of striking, the following brief explanation must suffice. The Irritation Strike depends for its successful adoption, on the men holding clearly the point of view, that their interests and the employers' are necessarily hostile. Further that the employer is vulnerable only in one place, his profits! Therefore if the men wish to bring effective pressure to bear, they must use methods which tend to reduce profits. One way of doing this is to decrease production, while continuing at work. Quite a number of instances where this method has been successfully adopted in South Wales could be adduced. The following will serve as an example:-

At a certain colliery some years ago, the management desired to introduce the use of screens for checking small coal. The men who were paid through and through for coal getting, e.g. for large and small coal in gross, objected, as they saw in this, the thin end of the wedge, of a move to reduce their earnings. The management persisted, and the men, instead of coming out on strike, reduced their output by half. Instead of sending four trams of coal from a stall, two only were filled and so on. The management thus saw its output cut in half, while its running expenses remained the same. A few days experience of a profitable industry turned into a losing one, ended in the men winning hands down. Plenty of other instances will occur to the reader, who will readily see, that production cannot be maintained at a high pressure without the willing co-operation of the workmen, so soon as they withdraw this willingness and show their discontent in a practical fashion, the wheels begin to creak. And only when the employer pours out the oil of his loving kindness, by removing the grievance, does the machinery begin to work smoothly again. This method is useless for the establishment of general principles over the whole industry, but can be

used, like the policeman's club, to bring individual employers to reason.

Joint Action by Lodges.

The tendency of large meetings is always towards purity of tone and breadth of outlook. The reactionary cuts a poor figure under such circumstances, however successful he may be, when surrounded in his own circle by a special clique.

Unifying the men by unifying demands.

It is intolerable that we should ask men to strike and suffer, if nothing is coming to them when they have helped to win the battle. We have seen many fights in this coalfield, in which all sections of underground workmen were engaged, but only to benefit one section, i.e., on a haulier's or collier's question. We must economize our strength, and see to it that every man who takes part in a fight, receives something, either in improved conditions or wages as his share of the victory.

The Elimination of the Employer.

This can only be obtained gradually and in one way. We cannot get rid of employers and slave-driving in the mining industry, until all other industries have organized for, and progressed towards, the same objective. Their rate of progress conditions ours; all we can do is set an example and the pace.

Nationalization of Mines.

Does not lead in this direction, but simply makes a National Trust, with all the force of the Government behind it, whose one concern will be, to see that the industry is run in such a way, as to pay the interest on the bonds, with which the Coalowners are paid out, and to extract as much more profit as possible, in order to relieve the taxation of other landlords and capitalists.

Our only concern is to see to it, that those who create the value receive it. And if by the force of a more perfect organization and more militant policy, we reduce profits, we shall at the same time tend to eliminate the shareholders who own the coalfield. As they feel the

increasing pressure we shall be bringing on their profits, they will loudly cry for Nationalization. We shall and must strenuously oppose this in our own interests, and in the interests of our objective.

Industrial Democracy the objective.

To-day the shareholders own and rule the coalfields. They own and rule them mainly through paid officials. The men who work in the mine are surely as competent to elect these, as shareholders who may never have seen a colliery. To have a vote in determining who shall be your fireman, manager, inspector, etc., is to have a vote in determining the conditions which shall rule your working life. On that vote will depend in a large measure your safety of life and limb, of your freedom from oppression by petty bosses, and would give you an intelligent interest in, and control over your conditions of work. To vote for a man to represent you in Parliament, to make rules for, and assist in appointing officials to rule you, is a different proposition altogether.

Our objective begins to take shape before your eyes. Every industry thoroughly organized, in the first place, to fight, to gain control of, and then to administer, that industry. The co-ordination of all industries on a Central Production Board, who, with a statistical department to ascertain the needs of the people, will issue its demands on the different departments of industry, leaving to the men themselves to determine under what conditions and how, the work should be done. This would mean real democracy in real life, making for real manhood and womanhood. Any other form of democracy is a delusion and a snare.

Every fight for, and victory won by the men, will inevitably assist them in arriving at a clearer conception of the responsibilities and duties before them. It will also assist them to see, that so long as shareholders are permitted to continue their ownership, or the State administers on behalf of the Shareholders, slavery and oppression are bound to be the rule in industry. And with this realization, the age-long oppression of Labour will draw to its end. The weary

sigh of the over-driven slave, pitilessly exploited and regarded as an animated tool or beast of burden: the mediaeval serf fast bound to the soil, and life-long prisoner on his lord's domain, subject to all the caprices of his lord's lust or anger: the modern wageslave, with nothing but his labour to sell, selling that, with his manhood as a wrapper, in the world's market place for a mess of pottage: these three phases of slavery, each in their turn inevitable and unavoidable, will have exhausted the possibilities of slavery, and mankind shall at last have leisure and inclination to really live as men, and not as the beasts which perish.

If these proposals meet with your approval, move the following resolution in your Lodge, to be sent on to District Meeting and Executive Council:

RESOLUTION

Date.....

That this, the.....Lodge of the
.....

is in favour of the draft scheme as contained in this pamphlet,* with the following exceptions:-

.....and urges its immediate adoption by the Federation.

Signed on behalf of the above Lodge,

.....Sec.

*If the scheme is approved as a whole, strike out these words, otherwise mention clauses objected to, as thus, Preamble Clause II., Constitution Clauses, III., V. and VII., etc.

Secretary of Reform Committee - W. H. MAINWARING, 3, Llwynceilyn, Clydach Vale, Rhondda, to whom also applications for Speakers, to further explain these proposals, should be sent. Such speakers would attend for out-of-pocket expenses.