

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

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## THE TRADES' UNION CONGRESS, SHEFFIELD.

### FIRST DAY.

The Congress of representatives of trades unions commenced its sittings at the Temperance Hall, Sheffield, on Monday Jan. 12th. The Congress is the workingman's parliament, a parliament where trade questions are discussed. Since 1835, in which year a Congress first assembled in London, it has been held in Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Leeds. Each year has made it more powerful and influential, until at last it has become one of the greatest associations in the kingdom. Nearly a million workmen were directly represented at this Congress; and almost every important trade organization sent its delegate. The delegates numbered nearly two hundred.

The Congress assembled at noon, but it was an hour later before any of the public business was transacted. The time, however, was not being wasted, for the Credentials Committee were very busy in examining the credentials of the delegates, a matter upon which they were very particular. At one o'clock, Mr. Alexander McDonald, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, announced that he would occupy the chair until the Congress had elected its own president. He then offered a few remarks, important in themselves as showing what thinking unionists think of trades unions. The time, he said, was passed when it was necessary to defend trade unions. They were self-evident institutions, institutions which were recognized by law, and which had proved themselves worthy of support and confidence. He expressed a hope that many of the grievances under which workmen now labored would soon be remedied; and that being so, he advised they should turn their attention to "fresh scenes and pastures new." He recommended that they should ascertain and declare what were the vocations of trades unions, and with this object in view he offered a prize of £20, to be increased to £30 if the adjudicators thought well, for an essay on "The Vocation of Trades Unions: their relation to trade, and their moral benefit to the members of such societies." Several reasons, he said, induced him to make this offer. He denied that trade and political economy were mysteries which the working class could not fathom. At all events, they intended to endeavor to fathom them. Workingmen, he said, had often been deluded by these so-called mysteries, whilst employers had put into their pockets a larger share of the profits of labor than they were entitled to. Besides that, they had given conditions to labor which were not fit for it—unhealthy factories, inhospitable workshops, fiery mines, wretched tenements for the agricultural laborers, and rotten ships for their sailors. He argued it was time workmen should take up the question of sanitary laws, and contended that they were the only persons who could successfully deal with it. (Applause.)

Mr. William Rolley, President of the Sheffield Trades' Council, was elected President, and Mr. Alfred Bailey, of Preston, Vice-President.

### THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

presented an able and exhaustive report, touching upon such subjects as the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Laws of Conspiracy, the Trades Union Act of 1871, the Juries Bill of 1873, the Compensation to Workmen Bill, the Federation of Employers, and concluded with announcing the following Parliamentary programme for 1874.

1. Repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.
2. Alteration of the Master and Servant Act, so that breach of contract shall not be a criminal offence.
3. Alteration of the Law of Conspiracy in accordance with the Bill introduced last session by the present Solicitor-General.
4. Reconstruction of the Small Penalties

Act, on the principle that imprisonment should only be used as a method of enforcing payment after failure of all other means, and as a last resort.

5. Consideration of Parliament of the important constitutional question of what limit should be placed upon the summary jurisdiction of magistrates, which deprives citizens of the right of trial by jury.

6. Enquiry by a Royal Commission as to the state of the laws and procedure relating to summary jurisdiction; as to the way in which the law has been administered by qualified and unqualified magistrates; and also as to the mode of their appointment and removal.

7. Reduction of the qualification of jurymen, to admit workmen to discharge the civic duties of jurymen.

8. Alteration of the law so that workmen or their families may be able to sue employers in the event of injury or death from accidents due to negligence.

9. A factory Nine Hours' Bill for women and children.

10. An Act to prevent Truck by making compulsory weekly payments to workmen in the current coin of the realm.

11. An Act for the better protection of seamen's lives by preventing the sending of ill-found, and unseaworthy vessels to sea.

### SECOND DAY.

The delegates resumed their sitting at the Temperance Hall, Tuesday morning. Mr. W. Rolley occupied the chair, when most of the delegates were present. Mr. Mundella M.P., Mr. Goldwin Smith, Mr. H. Crompton, Mr. F. Harrison, and Mr. Lloyd Jones entered the hall, and were received with loud cheers.

The Secretary read the minutes of the morning's proceedings, and they were confirmed.

### THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

The chairman said they would allow him to say in the first place, as one of the Sheffield representatives, that in the name of the Sheffield trades, he wished them welcome. The town of Sheffield had been in the memory of unionism and union men for periods before his existence. He hoped the Sheffield trades as well as other trades were rising in the scale of moral rectitude, and on the strength of the principles which bound unions together. (Cheers.) One thing had occurred to him as worthy of observation, and it was the purpose for which, from time to time, their congress meetings were held. One purpose they had in view was the furtherance of that most blessed of all principles—that of the common brotherhood. If he understood the principles of unionism rightly they did away, to a very great extent, with that selfishness which was peculiar to their race. Their unions brought to their consideration and to their hearts feelings of brotherhood, feelings of consideration, and feelings of respect in all the relationships of life. Therefore, when they assembled together after the manner of this week, there must of necessity be, as the object and the result of such meetings as that, a better state of feelings engendered, and a stronger bond of brotherhood and union formed. (Cheers.) Another feature in connection with their assembling together, was to discover the weak points of their organizations, and he could not conceive a more likely thing for the discovery of such weakness than the bringing of men together who had to do with great concerns of unionism the kingdom over. By their meeting and comparing their thought they were able to find out a better way of procedure for the future; they could go away better men in every sense of the word to do the battles of life they had to fight. (Cheers.) They had also to rectify all the wrongs under which they, as workmen, groaned. It has been stated that their parliamentary assemblage had become as great a consideration in some respects at least as the assembly of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. (Cheers.) Why should not that be so? They gathered together here and at other places every year, and

they represent far more than some of the M.P.'s in Parliament. They met to deliberate for the welfare of those whom they represented, and for the rectification of the wrongs which had bound them down in serfdom for years. They strove by the powers of mind they possessed—and if their intellects were not of the brightest, it was perhaps not altogether their own fault—to rectify those wrongs, and to devise means for the lightening of the burdens which pressed so heavily upon their race, and they engaged in these struggles fearlessly, and with the sole object of doing what was right. (Cheers.) They had in the standing orders and in the list of subjects for their consideration during the assembly, questions of vast importance. Legislation would come under their consideration, and whatever men may say about politics they had become a great power of oppression, and they found, even in their midst, men like themselves treated as the worst of men, men like themselves in the sight of the law were held to be guilty, and he said that if the administrators of the law were consistent with the law itself they must arrest every trades union leader in England and put him under lock and key, because of the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. If they were held to be guilty for over-beseeching and over-persuading their fellows, and he asked what in the name of heaven was the business of any trades union leader if not to persuade his fellows to be true to the principles of unionism—then in the sight of the law they were verily held to be guilty and treated as such. The Government and the country knew that the committee elected by the working men's congress had power—but in his judgment that power might be very greatly increased. In the first place, it might be increased by a stronger federation amongst themselves, and by making the committee a direct connecting link of the trades unions of the country, instead of being simply the connecting link from Congress to Congress, as they were at present. What should hinder that Congress from making the Parliamentary Committee the direct representative of all the trades unions throughout the country? His idea with reference to that subject was, that the Parliamentary Committee, by direct contribution from the trades composing the Congress, should constantly keep connected with those trades. As it was, they had no direct communication with any trade. They were simply appointed by one Congress, and waited until the next Congress came round, doing the work of Parliament in reference to legislation throughout the year. How much better it would be if all the delegates of the Congress, and the members represented by those delegates, would so increase the funds of the Parliamentary Committee—he cared not how small the contribution was—and give them such a direct connection with the trades they represented. They would then possess a hundredfold more power in the House of Commons than they did now. Let them strive in whatever way they could, to increase the power of those who represented them at the seat of power. They might also conduce to that object by sending as many workmen representatives to Parliament at the next general election as they possibly could. There were many men in their ranks, and if those men got into the House of Commons with a direct representation of the working class interest, the House of Commons would so alter in the framing of its laws in reference to class legislation, that they would not exist long, but would be swept away from the statute book of our land. (Cheers.) There were, as they had already intimated, Acts of Parliament which they called class legislation, and they must never rest until those Acts were removed. He was sorry to see that the press, either from its sources of information, or from its inherent dislike to their organization, sometimes fearfully misrepresented them. Last Saturday in one of the local papers, he read in the Sheffield trade report, in reference to the strike at the Atlas works of the steel work-

ers, as a reason why the masters wished to reduce the wages 10 per cent., that in consequence of the exorbitant rate of wages and the cost of material, they could no longer compete with foreign competitors. He knew for a fact that the greatest number of men who were on strike had never had an advance of wages during the whole time of good trade that was past. How, he asked in the face of that fact, could such statements be true? They heard on all sides that the depression of trade was but the consequence of high wages, and time after time had those statements been repeated by the highest authority of workmen's associations. They heard from the colliers' representatives that they received nothing like a proportionate increase of wages to the increase in the price of coal, and if the colliers were not getting it, who amongst the workmen were? The statement was false that workmen's wages had been raised in proportion to the sale of the manufactured goods they worked. Their course must be forward. They had met to deliberate as to the future, and he did not forget the masters' federation which had been arranged during the past year. They must, if possible, make themselves doubly strong in order that the grand issues which they had at heart might be crowned with success. (Cheers.) Sometimes it was delayed, sometimes it was held back by the panderer and time-server who lived with them; but let their motto be forward until every obstacle be removed; let their motto be onward until every shackle be broken off. Let the voice of their congress be clear and distinct, and the action of all their trades unions at the general election be decisive, that the world should know that they had rights which they intended to maintain; that the world should know that workmen were no longer to be trodden beneath the foot of the oppressor. He bid them God speed in all the deliberations of the congress, and he hoped at the end of the week they would go forth to their respective trades stronger men, with stronger courage, and stronger nerve, and never swerve from the path of duty and right whatever be in the way. That was his mission, and that was what he wished them in their deliberations. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Huddiday (Bolton) moved a vote of thanks to the chairman for his address.

After some routine business, Mr. Henry Crompton read a lengthy and able paper on the National Federation of Associated Employers of Labor, which we shall take the opportunity of re-producing in a future issue.

The reader of the paper was loudly cheered at intervals whilst reading it, and at its conclusion, a vote of thanks was unanimously accorded him, on the motion of Mr. Macdonald, seconded by Mr. Kane.

### THE CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT.

The Chairman reported that he was instructed by the Parliamentary Committee to add the following sentence to the programme:—"In conclusion, the committee beg to submit the following programme of Parliamentary action for the session of 1874. (1st) the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act." He then invited Mr. Mundella to open the discussion on this subject.

Mr. Mundella, M. P., who was received with loud cheers, said he was unexpectedly called upon to speak to them as to the course in the past of their Parliamentary Committee; and for himself and those who were associated with them in Parliament, with reference to the Criminal Law Amendment Act. They knew how this act grew up. They knew out of the Trades Commission came certain recommendations from the commissioners, especially from the very wise minority of the Commission—one of the most eminent of whom, Mr. Frederick Harrison, was now on the platform. (Cheers.) It showed very clearly the necessity for the alteration of the old law of George IV. They all know how their funds were not protected, and how the men accused of dishonest action escaped by pleading that the funds were intend-

for trades union purposes. (Hear, hear.) He had the pleasure on his entrance into Parliament, in connection with Mr. Thos. Hughes, to introduce a Bill which would have fairly met the whole case. (Hear, hear.) That Bill did not pass in the first session of Parliament, on account of the large amount of, not so much overt as of covert hostility—a something which they could all feel, but which they could not describe. (Hear, hear.) They succeeded in passing a temporary measure which gave protection for one year to the funds of the union. The next year the Government introduced its own Bill, and he must say that in doing so they acted upon the advice of gentlemen who were as sincere friends of trades unionists as any of those on the platform. The gentleman who drew the Bill wished to be eminently fair. He wished to say that for them. The Bill passed through the House of Commons, but when it got into the Lords it underwent certain changes, which intensified the worst clauses of that Act. (Hear, hear.) He said at the time when these Lords' amendments were introduced, what experience had amply proved, that the result of the introduction of those amendments, and the rejection of certain clauses in the Act would produce an amount of heart-burning and agitation which would necessitate further changes in the measure or its total repeal. (Cheers.) The results have been exactly what he foresaw. They had had convictions; dealing only with labor questions under that Act, which had struck not so much at unionists as at anybody who took any part whatever in sympathy with certain acts on the part of laborers. In proof of this statement, he instanced the case of women in South Wales and Chipping Norton. They were not trades unionists, but they naturally sympathized with their husbands and brothers; and in the action they took, they did what was done in all times of commotion, in all times of excitement in election, they shouted their approval or disapproval of certain things. For this they were sent in a cart on a cold night with children at their breasts to prison. (Cries of "shame.") An attempt was made by their Parliamentary Committee, with the aid of Sir W. V. Harcourt, Sir H. James and himself, to amend the Act, and to put it on such a footing that the employers could not say that they were repealing the Act, or abolishing the statute that was accomplishing such great things. They met them in a very fair spirit; but they would not listen, and the result was that the present Solicitor-General said, "You will hear of my Bill no more; and the next time you will hear of will be the total repeal of the Act." (Loud Cheers.) Last Session at the request of the Parliamentary Committee, he undertook the introduction of that Bill. He could assure them that they were not so barren of friends in the House of Commons that he had any difficulty to get names to put on the back of the bill. (Cheers.) His difficulty was to select names to put on the bill. He declared to them that he needed no solicitation; but he took the names that he thought employers would not object to—representative names, and all employers. (Hear, hear.) Let them mark what he did, and listen to the paragraph in the employers' memorial to the Home Secretary, which Mr. Crompton had been too modest to read. It ought to be read, that they might know why Mr. Crompton had objected to give the correspondence with Mr. Jackson. The paragraph was— "It appears the main object of the promoters of the existing statute is to legalize this practice of picking up, of facilitating the employment of spies, and to authorize trades unionists to substitute the machinery of intimidation, to be used against the industrious working men, women, and children. We inquire, what honest object can such a proposal have?" He hoped his life and public character would defend him against such imputations as that; and the life and character of those with whom he was associated ought to have made those gentle-

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