

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The Annual Conference of the United Mineworkers of Scotland

By Harry Pollitt (London).

The Second Annual Conference of the U.M.S. was held in **Edinburgh** on Sunday, October 12th. In spite of tremendous financial difficulties there was a representation which indicated the determination and strength of the union members to overcome all difficulties in order that the whole coalfield could be represented. There were present 56 delegates from U.M.S. branches, 7 delegates from womens' guilds, 19 organisers and members of the Executive, and 9 fraternal delegates from the N.U.W.M., Minority Movement, and W.I.R.

The conference was opened by President **Comrade Kirk** whose speech dealt with the present economic crisis of capitalism, and in particular the crisis in the mining industry.

The report of the Executive Committee's work for the past year was given by the General Secretary **W. Allan**, who reviewed the many strike activities of the Union, and showed how in other spheres of activity such as compensation claims, etc., the U.M.S. was responsible for many important gains so far as treatment of injured workers was concerned.

In the **discussion** which followed, in which many of the delegates participated, the outstanding thing which was noticed was the terrible picture they painted of the conditions that obtain in the Scottish coalfield. One delegate crystallising this when he declared that "the Scottish miners are going through hell, suffering the torments of the damned", and this was eloquently confirmed by the speech of one of the women from the Womens' guild who showed the terrible situation that exists for their menfolk, and in this connection how important it was that the work of the womens' guilds should be given great prominence in order that they could mobilise the miners' wives effectively behind all the miners' current struggles.

After an exhaustive discussion the report of the Executive was adopted unanimously.

The main resolution dealing with the mining situation and the tasks of the U.M.S. was introduced by **Comrade Young** on behalf of the Executive, who outlined the character of the crisis facing the mining industry to-day, and what steps the U.M.S. must take in order that it can win the decisive leadership of the mass of the miners.

The whole of the tasks enumerated in the resolution to be carried forward on the basis of a wide recruiting campaign around the following programme of the U.M.S.

1. Fight for the Seven-Hour Day, a guaranteed wage of 12/- a day for hewers, stonemen, machine-men, etc., 11/- a day for all underground workers, 10/- a day for surface workers.
2. A guaranteed weekly wage of £ 3. 0. 0., £ 2. 15. 0., and £ 2. 10. 0. for the respective grades.
3. Adequate protection for young workers, and equal pay for equal work.

Com. Harry Pollitt, fraternal delegate from the Minority Movement, brought greetings to the conference, and showed the necessity for the U.M.S. closing its ranks and making a tremendous step forward in its activity throughout the whole coalfield, particularly in adopting practical measures to strengthen the inner life of the Union, to ensure more effective strike preparation, to develop womens' work, and bring about a closer personal touch between the leaders of the U.M.S. and the membership in the pits and branches.

Com. **McShane**, fraternal delegate from the N.U.W.M., made a speech showing the necessity at this moment above all others for securing the unity of the unemployed and employed workers, and indicated the role that the U.M.S. could play in this connection, particularly in supporting the coming Scottish march on Edinburgh of the unemployed workers.

Com. **Proudfoot** moved an emergency resolution on the Workers' Charter and effectively pointed out the tremendous weapon this placed in the hands of the U.M.S. in its future work in the coalfield; the resolution pledging support to the fight for the Workers' Charter, and to mobilise the miners for demonstrations on the eve of the opening of parliament, and to secure a mass representation at the National Charter Conference in January was adopted with acclamation.

Com. **J. Stewart** in a very effective speech moved a resolution supporting the "**Daily Worker**", pledging the conference to assist in developing Friends of "**The Daily Worker Committees**", securing "**Daily Worker**" correspondents in the coalfields, and raising money for "**The Daily Worker**" Guarantee Fund. This resolution was also carried unanimously.

Great enthusiasm was created by the receipt of a telegram from Com. **Gallacher** the Communist candidate at Shipley wishing the U.M.S. every success, and amidst stormy applause it was decided to send the greetings and wishes of success from the U.M.S. to Com. **Gallacher** in his fight in the Shipley byelection.

The conference then gave its attention to various amendments which had been proposed to the rules, and after decision had been reached on these points, a motion was put by Com. **Kirk** that for the remaining period of his office he should be relieved from the duties of president in order to enable him to devote the whole of his time to organising work in the Lothian coalfields, and the Executive unanimously recommended the conference to elect **David Proudfoot** to the presidency of the U.M.S.

In spite of various shortcomings which have been noted and will be obviated in future, it is a fact that this Second Annual Conference of the U.M.S. has witnessed a closing of the ranks, a keen recognition of the opportunities that lie in front, and a determination on the part of all present to go forward with confidence and optimism in the daily work of building up the union and making it the most powerful organ of the Scottish miners' daily struggle.