

“Red” Fed. Memoirs

*Being a brief survey of the Birth
and Growth of the Federation of
Labour from 1908 to 1915
and of the days that immediately
-:- -:- preceded it -:- -:-*

*By P. H. HICKEY,
First Secretary N.Z. Miners' Federation
— and —
Formerly General Secretary United Federation of Labour*

Pat Hickey

Patrick Hickey was born in Waimea South on January 19, 1882, the son of a small farmer of Irish origin. He worked in the Denniston coal mines and spent several years in the western United States where he joined the Socialist Party.

In 1906 he returned to New Zealand and soon made a name for himself on the West Coast as a socialist propagandist.

Hickey was one of the leader of the Blackball miners' strike in 1908 and was a founder of the Miners' Federation which later become the "Red" Federation of Labour.

A brilliant speaker and an able writer, Hickey was a spokesman of the radical wing inside the federation. In 1913 he was elected secretary-treasurer of the new United Federation of Labour, but in 1915 he left with his family for Australia where he took part in the anti-conscription campaign.

In 1920 Hickey returned to New Zealand to edit the Maoriland Worker. After contesting the Wellington mayoralty in 1921 he moved to Auckland where he started his own printing business

In 1925 he contested the Invercargill seat on behalf of the Labour Party but in the following year he again left for Australia. At the time of his death he was a member of the town council of Abbotsford in Victoria.

THIS BELONGS TO
MICHAEL GREEN.
PLEASE RETURN.

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FOREWORD



At the request of many old comrades and friends, and to gratify a desire that has long intrigued me, I have written the following short review of the Federation of Labour.

In deciding to give my own impressions of the days under notice rather than to follow the usual course of chronicling events in the order of occurrence, I have done so believing that the personal touch will add to the reader's interest in the following pages.

Whilst I have trusted to my memory to a very great extent in describing many early incidents recorded, I have also had access to the Minute Books and Reports of the Federation from 1908 to 1913.

In dealing with the birth of the United Federation of Labour and the Social Democratic Party I was on easy ground, for as Secretary of the two great Conferences of January and July, 1913, I was fully conversant with all the incidents connected with them.

I feel, however, that I have but imperfectly performed my task, but in any case I have placed on record with some degree of sequence the history of the most epochal days of New Zealand's unionism.

It was my intention to include the history of the United Federation of Labour and the 1913 strike in the present volume, but on second thoughts I have decided to confine myself to the story of the old "Red" Federation. I may, at a later date, deal with the United Federation of Labour and the stirring days of the 1913 strike.

I cannot conclude this brief foreword without placing on record my indebtedness to Mr. John Glover, of Wellington, whose action in placing at my disposal minutes and reports covering the years of the Federation's existence has made my task much lighter than it would otherwise have been.

P .H. HICKEY.

Auckland, N.Z.,
1925.

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P. C. WEBB
President



R. SEMPLE
Organiser



P. H. HICKEY



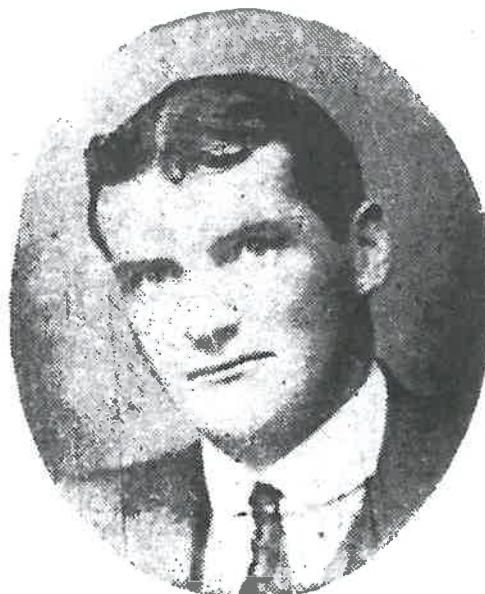
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J. DOWGRAY
Treasurer



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M. FAGAN



H. I. ARMSTRONG



R. S. ROSS

Editor "Maoriland Worker"



I. FULTON



R. N. RIDD

WHEN ALL WAS PEACE

The morale of the scantily organised workers of New Zealand was badly broken by the Maritime Strike of 1890.

What little unionism remained at the conclusion of that historic struggle was a timid and weakly thing. For in those days men paid dearly (as they sometimes pay to-day) for possessing the courage to insist upon the right to organise, and since working men the world over are largely the same, there were but few with the determination or knowledge essential to carry on under the adverse circumstances prevailing.

But close on the heels of the disastrous ending of the Maritime Strike, came a battle at the polls, and men who had seen their organisation disappear before the attacks of the Monied Power, felt that by means of Parliament there was an opportunity of securing that justice to which they were entitled, and they flung themselves into the campaign with energy and enthusiasm.

Though indifferently organised at that time, the employing class as a whole were almost unanimously behind the Conservative Party of Sir Harry Atkinson, the then Premier, and regarded the advent of a Liberal Government headed by men like John Ballance and Richard Seddon with almost the same feelings as their confreres of to-day would regard a Government in charge of H. E. Holland

The elections resulted in the sweeping away of the Conservative Government. There was a general feeling among the workers that at long last a curb would be placed upon grasping employerdom.

In this they were not disappointed, for over a period of many years Acts were passed designed to assist the workers. Not the least of these being the famous Conciliation and Arbitration Act introduced by the Hon. W. P. Reeves in 1894. And under the shadow of that Act New Zealand labour lolled for years. Designed to "encourage the formation of industrial unions," that measure, whilst making possible the scattering of small craft unions all over the land, had the additional effect of taking away from the individual unionist the recognition of his duty to himself, to his organisation, and to his class.

Unions existed, not as fighting battallions in a Workers' Army, but merely as revenue-paying propositions that made possible office equipment, salaries and the expenses entailed in securing awards.

Periodically the Arbitration Court was approached, heard evidence, delivered judgment, generally covering a period of from two to three years, and the recipients, without exception, unquestionably accepted the Court's findings, no matter how foolish or unjust the decisions may have been.

For years this meek acceptance of the Court's decisions was characteristic of our unionism, if unionism it could be called. Any indications of dissatisfaction with the Judge's findings on the part of a union's membership was effectively squashed by officials, who, with a pitying look upon their faces, lectured the incipient revolvers about "the '90 strike."

THE GATHERING STORM

A reaction against years of unquestioning acceptance of the findings of the Arbitration Court was inevitable.

Undoubtedly that period was hastened by the frequent changes on the Court itself. The first Judges found their task comparatively easy. Wages were low, hours long, conditions of labour deplorable. An increase of wages here, a shortening of hours there, an alteration of the working conditions somewhere else—all were to the workers' advantage. The Court was hailed as the instrument of the workers' salvation.

But there came a time when the Court refused to increase wages or alter conditions, when men with very little, if any, sympathy with the workers were appointed to the Bench. A time when, with increasing arrogance, the workers were lectured for their continuous demands for better wages and conditions. One learned Judge asked, "When was this continual demand for increased wages going to cease?" "Will the workers never be satisfied?" His Honour demanded of a trembling union secretary. Crude interruptions, bumptious advice, and scant attention to evidence, indicating either that the judicial mind was already fully determined upon a decision or to plainly show an utter contempt for an embarrassed and inexperienced union advocate, were all factors that played a part in preparing the way for a widespread and almost unanimous revolt against judicial tyranny.

An additional factor that made for a clearer working-class viewpoint was the growing consciousness among the workers that there could be no

permanent advantage won by Labour so long as it remained a mere appendage, only just tolerated, by the Liberal Party. The example of the growing strength and influence of organised Labour politically in Australia, notwithstanding its many shortcomings and its numerous tragic blunderings, was not without its effect in New Zealand, as demonstrating that Labour could become a powerful political force quite independent of the Liberal Party. And as that feeling grew there was a keener perception that the value of many of the Liberal Party's measures were greatly over-rated; and none more so than the extravagant claims put forward on behalf of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

The first organised opposition to the findings of the Court came from the slaughtermen at Petone in 1907. This was shortly followed by a rebellion on the part of the members of the Blackball Miners' Union. And it is from this latter event, I believe, that there began that definite repudiation of the principle of Compulsory Arbitration by the leading unions of New Zealand.

DENNISTON ASSERTS ITSELF.

It was in 1906 that I started work for the Westport Coal Company on Denniston Hill. I had worked there some years previously, but was too busy "having a good time" to take any serious interest in union affairs.

In 1906, however, I had but recently returned from America, and not only held a "red card" in the American Socialist Party, but was also the proud possessor of a membership ticket in that one-time great American fighting Union, the Western Federation of Miners.

At almost the first union meeting I attended in Denniston, I unknowingly caused quite a sensation by suggesting to the gathering, since the company had refused to comply with a manifestly reasonable request for the adjustment of certain grievances, "that the members cease work until the matter is rectified." I met looks of astonishment on every side. Did I not know that the Arbitration Act would not permit of such action? was demanded of me. "Well," I replied, "if we ask that certain things be done and are refused, are we then to accept that decision as final?" By way of reply, I was informed that that was the position unless a breach of the award was committed.

From then on I became a rather hostile critic of compulsory arbitration, and, with others, carried on an agitation for cancellation of registration.

At this time the President of the Denniston Miners was Mr. John Foster, a man well advanced in years, entirely self-educated, with by no means a wide grasp of the Labour Movement, but possessing a full measure of shrewd common sense, and one who, in his day, under adverse circumstances, did the very best he could for those whom he represented. John had a remarkable influence among the miners of the West Coast, and as President of the Westland Trades and Labour Council attended the N.Z. Conferences of the Trades Councils, and was generally regarded as being the spokesman for the miners' unions.

He was a whole-hearted supporter of Arbitration. He could not conceive of unionism without Arbitration, and in this connection he reflected the outlook of every miners' official on the West Coast at that time.

He was consistent, too. When the miners' unions severed their connection with the Court, he ceased to hold office, and left the mines, and when I last saw him was a successful bridge contractor in the Nelson district.

I had not been in Denniston very long when there arrived there, direct from the Victorian mining town of Rutherglen, a young man of about 22 years of age, who was destined afterwards to play a big and courageous part in N.Z. history—P. C. Webb—"Paddy" to thousands of his fellows in this Dominion.

My first recollection of "Paddy" in 1907 was that of a square-built young chap, always late for work, rushing across the Denniston plateau, the backs of his trousers legs worn through at the bottom for a distance of about nine inches, and vigorously flapping, as he hastened on his way, a coat that appeared to have been "snatched from the burning," so fire-scarred was it; and a hat so well ventilated that hairs protruded from every angle—except the top.

An enthusiastic Socialist, then as now, Pat preached his philosophy at all times. His capacity for argument appeared—and I believe was—unlimited. Certainly in a single-handed contest he was unbeatable. He had but recently read Spencer's philosophical works, and used to insist, with right forefinger prodding the palm of his left hand, that "we must proceed from the simple to the complex." From mine manager to trucker, Paddy argued with them all.

We formed a Branch of the N.Z. Socialist Party. I wrote out the notice and attached it to the Notice Board. Whatever else this little organisation may

have failed to do, it at least was responsible for broadcasting among the mine workers pamphlets and booklets dealing with various phases of the Labour Movement.

Our favourite pamphlets were those of Kerr and Co., of Chicago, dealing with industrial unionism, being mainly reprints of speeches by Debs, De Leon, and others; and so, for the first time in the history of the West Coast, the doctrine of a bigger unionism was made known.

THE GREY AWAKES.

In due time I left Denniston. I had commenced an agitation for the abolition of the degrading system of medical examination of workers before employment, which was in force at that time. Not only was the system attacked through Union meetings, but I had also written a number of letters to the press on the same subject; and these activities aroused the ire of the company's representatives, and they naturally looked forward to their pound of flesh. In leaving Denniston I did not have any choice in the matter. I obtained work with the Westport-Stockton Coal Co., and after being employed there about a week the manager handed me a letter which had been addressed care of the company, and intimated at the same time that "my services were no longer required." Evidently the word was being passed along.

I next secured employment in the State Mine at Runanga. Here I met for the first time one who is now New Zealand's most popular platform speaker—Robert Semple. Like Webb, Bob is an Australian, his native State being New South Wales. He came to New Zealand as a result of the part played by him

in the famous Victorian Coal Miners' Strike, which lasted 20 months. The miners were defeated, prominent men blacklisted, and Bob, accompanied by "Bill" Ambury, now of Granity, like many good industrialists before them, came to New Zealand under assumed names, and secured employment.

When I first met him, Bob was President of the State Miners' Union, and under his guidance it was shaking off the apathy hitherto characteristic of it. Bob, even in those days, was the "Fighting Bob" who shook New Zealand to the foundations a few years later. My first meeting with him was when we discussed the formation of a Branch of the Socialist Party.

The impression I gained then was one that often impressed me in the years that followed—his wonderful capacity for detail. In planning a campaign, in outlining a policy, the most minute detail was never overlooked. Together, we formed Branches of the Socialist Party in Greymouth, Runanga, Brunnerton, Reefton, and Blackball.

I look back now with considerable enjoyment on the team work we displayed. I would open, outlining what we wanted done; Bob would follow in elaboration and exhortation. We would ask for questions, but regarded each questioner as an opponent, and proceeded to crush him for his temerity in language that could not possibly be misunderstood. Questions, therefore, were but few, for which we were duly thankful.

As was the case in Denniston, these little Socialist groups carried on an intensive propaganda. We did indeed build more firmly than we knew, for from them sprung the recruits that in later days made an army that was unparalleled in N.Z. or Australia.

Ben Tillett came to the West Coast. We organised meetings for him, and his eloquence stirred us to redoubled efforts. Webb was dismissed from Denniston for the part he played in organising Tillett's meeting there. Pat came to Greymouth at the New Year, 1908, and he and I, together with a half-dozen others, secured employment at Blackball.

THE BLACKBALL STRIKE

Blackball was a mining centre that worked under conditions quite dissimilar to any other Coast colliery. One of the standing grievances was the time allowed for "crib" (meal-time) underground. In all other collieries the time was thirty minutes; in Blackball, fifteen. At the first Union meeting we attended the matter came up for discussion, and we carried a resolution to the effect that no member of the Union take less than thirty minutes. Arbitration was quoted to us. We jeered at it. What was our Union for? we wanted to know. We smote the Arbitrationists hip and thigh. We vanquished them. The Secretary was instructed to write the mining company, notifying it that on and after a certain date (what the time was I do not now remember, but it was short) all employees would take thirty minutes for "crib."

We didn't appoint any delegates to interview the management on the matter; we just sent our ultimatum along. The upshot was that on the day our regulation was to come into force the mine manager came into my working place whilst I was eating my lunch (my mate happened to be absent that day), and stood over me with his watch in his hand, and at the end of fifteen minutes said, in what, no doubt, was intended for a tone of authority: "Hickey, you

have had fifteen minutes for ' crib ' ; as manager of this mine, I order you to resume work. I looked up at him, and objected to his arbitrary demand, and replied: " But look here, Boko, I haven't eaten my pie yet." " No joking," he replied; " I order you to resume work." " And I refuse," I replied. He then intimated to me that he would institute proceedings against me under the Mining Regulations for " refusing to obey the lawful commands of the mine manager."

He hastened from me, and gave a similar order to another mine worker, whose adherence to Union principles was not his strong point.

In due time I appeared in the Magistrate's Court, and was fined, I think, 21s., with 35s. costs, or a fortnight's imprisonment.

Meanwhile, we continued our agitation and insisted upon greater attention being paid to the sanitation and ventilation of the mine, this latter complaint being particularly well-grounded, for the amount of consideration shown by the management to this essential item being meagre indeed.

Acting on instructions from those " higher up," the mine manager entered the mine one memorable day, came into my working place, and ordered me to " get to hell out of it," and said he had put up with enough from me. I went—outside the mine. Presently, others came out to join me—there were seven of us in all—J. Goldsmith, H. J. Fox, T. Milligan, G. R. Hunter, W. Bromilow, and P. C. Webb. That night a Union meeting was held, the Secretary, Mr. Walter Rogers (a capable official, a fearless fighter, and a grand comrade, whose premature death was a great loss to Labour) said to me: " There is only one thing to do;

we will tie the mine up." An unheard-of proposal, but tie up the mine we did, with a demand that the dismissed men be reinstated.

The amount of attention given to this strike was really astonishing. We were bombarded with delegations, telegrams, and threats, with the result that we felt quite important personages. The Arbitration Court rushed headlong to the scene, or rather to Greymouth, and fined this small Union of about 120 members £75, or 75 per cent. of the then maximum penalty, for striking.

I have a vivid recollection of the Court scene. About thirty miners attended as witnesses, each with a red ribbon in his coat and the majority wearing red ties as well. I well remember the gleam in "his Honour's" eye and the frown upon his face as the witnesses entered the box. To this day I feel convinced that the severity of the fine was due as much to the prevalence of our red ties and ribbons as it was to the "crime."

An interesting incident occurred during the hearing of this case, which we afterwards used with much effect. Our solicitor, the late Sir A. R. Guinness, in addressing the Court, referred to the "crib" time allowance of fifteen minutes as being altogether too short; his Honour remarked with a frown that he thought fifteen minutes ample time. He then glanced at the clock, noticed that the time was 12.30, and stated that the Court stood adjourned for lunch till 2 p.m.

THE STRIKE CONTINUES.

This strike brought to light a fundamental weakness of the Arbitration system. Whilst it was quite an easy matter to fine a union for striking, that by no means ended the strike. The press and public

could not understand the position. Here was a union punished by the Industrial Court that just went on striking. The discovery was made that it was one thing to fine a union for striking, but another to make the members of it resume work.

All over New Zealand the press demanded that the Government again prosecute the Union for remaining on strike. But the Government, being wiser than angry editors, realising that unless it moved warily it was likely to make itself look foolish, refused to take any further action. It was then, apparently to appease the critics, that the Attorney-General (Dr. Findlay) gave his famous opinion that "a strike is not a continuous offence"; that the breach of the law occurred at the time when the miner, with pick suspended in air, made his resolution to strike and dropped his tool. At that identical moment the strike took place, and since its continuance but followed on that action, it was the action, not the continuance, that constituted the offence.

The strike continuing, the Union sent Mr. D. K. Pritchard (now of the Hutt) to tour the South Island, whilst I was dispatched through the Buller and the North Island. We were instructed to place our case before the Unions and to appeal for funds.

It was by no means an easy task. The old-time union official could not understand our attitude, with the result that we were refused support in many places where we had every reason to expect it. A case in point was the Millerton Miners' Union. It refused us assistance on the grounds that we had flouted the Court. The few shillings received from there being the result of collections taken up by Mr. Tom McDermott.

In all, I collected some £1,000 on the tour. Mr. Pritchard was not nearly so fortunate, as his mission appeared to have resolved itself into a controversy on the question of Arbitration between union officials and himself.

I visited Wellington, Auckland, Waikato, and the Auckland goldfields. When I reached Onehunga—the Main Trunk was not completed at this time—I was met on the wharf by Mr. Arthur Rosser, of Auckland. During my stay in Auckland, Mr. Rosser arranged my meetings and rendered every possible assistance. Every Union with which he was connected forwarded a contribution to the strike fund. It was on this occasion that I met for the first time Mr. M. J. Savage, now deputy-leader of the N.Z. Labour Party. He, too, assisted me in every way. Also Mr. Tom Long, then, I believe, connected with the Enginedrivers' Union.

I visited the Goldfields, and received much encouragement and assistance there. At that time Mr. H. T. Armstrong (now M.P. for Christchurch East) was president of the Waihi Miners' Union, and the friendship formed at that time has been cemented through the years.

A TASTE OF THE LAW

In due time I returned to Blackball. After I had been back about a week, I was approached by the local constable, who informed me that he had a warrant for my arrest for refusing to pay the fine inflicted in the Magistrate's Court arising out of the "crib"-time incident.

Said the constable: "I am supposed to lock you up to-night, but if you will meet me at the corner at nine to-morrow morning, it will be all right."

I was at the rendezvous at nine the following morning, as was also the policeman and the Blackball Band. We got into a coach to proceed to Ngahere. The band got into another, and to the strains of martial music, and accompanied by practically every member of the Union, I was escorted to the railway station, en route to gaol.

The weather was cold, and when my escort handed me over to the sergeant at the Greymouth police station I was ushered into what was evidently the inspector's office, for a comfortable leather chair and a roaring fire greeted me. I was informed that I would have to remain there until the evening train left for Hokitika, at which place I was due to spend my fourteen days.

The sergeant, after arguing with me on the wisdom of paying my fine, said: "Oh, well, I'll leave you, and if you want anything just press that button" (indicating a button on the wall). Later, the coal scuttle becoming empty, I pressed the button, and a stalwart policeman entered the room. I pointed to the scuttle, and with a grin he picked it up, and brought it back filled with coal.

In a few hours' time, about four at the outside, the sergeant came into the room, and excitedly informed me that I was to "get out of it." My fine had been paid. I denied the right of anyone to pay fines on my behalf. But the law was obdurate. The fine had been paid, and the police were satisfied. Who paid the fine they did not know, but paid it was, so I was summarily pushed forth into the street.

Many years afterwards I was informed by the late Mr. M. Hannan, solicitor, of Greymouth, that, acting under instructions from the Blackball Coal Co., he had paid the fine.

THE GOVERNMENT COLLECTS ITS FINE

The strike, after lasting about three months, was brought to a close. The dismissed men were reinstated; the half-hour for "crib" time incorporated into the Statutes of the Dominion, together with an amendment to the Mines Act, which provides that any official of a mine using abusive language to a miner underground renders himself liable to prosecution.

We had not been back at work very long before the authorities issued distress warrants against members of the Union for payment of the fine of £75 imposed on the Union. A bailiff visited Blackball, and seized furniture and effects to the value of £125 in satisfaction of the fine. He spent about three days on the job with a driver and cart. The bailiff's taste seemed to run to sewing machines, bicycles, and chests of drawers. A sale of property was duly advertised, with the bailiff as auctioneer. On the day of the sale (which took place in the street) the miners stopped work and attended in a body. Many visitors from adjoining villages were also present.

Before the sale commenced, I somewhat rudely pushed the bailiff from his rostrum, and, mounting it, outlined the facts in connection with the seizure of the household goods, and informed the gathering that if they imagined that they would be able to secure bargains they would be very quickly disillusioned. "For," I remarked, "we will not only deal with you when you bid, but after you have bidden." A group of young miners, headed by the late Jim Bowers (a boxer of some note) had already been "sworn in" to handle prospective bargain-hunters.

By arrangement, the late Mr. Bob Gregory "bought in" on the Union's behalf. Bicycles valued at £25 were purchased for 1s. 6d.; sewing machines for 2s. 6d. In all, the forced sale realised 12s. 6d. As soon as the sale was over men and women could be seen carrying their effects back to their homes.

Eventually the fine was collected by means of a lien on the workers' wages.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR FEDERATION BEGINS

Naturally, the events arising out of this memorable strike had the effect of directing the workers' attention to the many absurdities of the Arbitration system. That the Court was rather one-sided in its outlook became apparent to even the dullest-witted worker. But the question arose: What are we to put in its place? The answer we gave to that query was: Closer organisation.

Whilst a resident of Runanga, I met a remarkably well-informed character, a wide reader and keen observer—Mr. Frank Hudson. He continually dinned into my ears the need of federation, not merely of the miners, but of all workers. Later, Frank used to bike to Blackball to continue his lessons, till I became as convinced of the urgent need of greater unity as he was. I know that he similarly used to din his doctrines into Semple's ears as well. At last we decided to make a definite move.

At special meetings of the State and Blackball Miners' Unions, R. Semple and P. H. Hickey were appointed to tour the Coast to establish, if possible, a federation of all workers' unions. We visited the Buller, Reefton, and Grey districts, and at all union meetings were successful in getting resolutions

carried to the effect that a vote would be taken on the question of closer organisation. We had ballot papers with us (Mr. Semple saw to that), and when the ballots were taken at the mine mouths it disclosed majorities of from 10 to 20 to 1 for federation.

In due time a conference was held in Greymouth. An extract from the minutes reads: "The conference of West Coast Unions for the purpose of forming a Federation was commenced in Beirne's Hotel on Tuesday, August 4, 1908. The conference opened at 10 a.m., the following delegates being present: Messrs. P. Cumming (Seddonville), J. Wesley (Granity), R. Semple (State Mine), P. H. Hickey (Blackball), J. Foster (Denniston), H. Kennedy (Reefton), G. Newton (Grey Valley Workers). Mr. R. Semple was appointed chairman and P. H. Hickey secretary of the conference.

The membership of the Unions represented were placed on record, and disclosed the following:—

Inangahua Miners	700	Blackball Miners	130
Granity Miners	600	Seddonville Miners	80
Denniston Miners	400	Grey Valley Workers	40
State Miners	400		

Being a total of 2,350.

It was resolved that, in view of the action decided upon by the Trades and Labour Council Conference (which had just concluded its sittings in Wellington) to form a Federation of Labour, the name of this organisation be the New Zealand Federation of Miners.

The following preamble and objects were adopted (the preamble being practically identical with that of the Western Federation of Miners, U.S.A.; about the only additions being Objects 1 and 2):—

PREAMBLE AND OBJECTS

We hold that all men are created to be free, and should have equal access and opportunity to the enjoyment of all benefits to be derived from their exertions in dealing with the natural resources of the earth, and that free access and equal opportunity thereto are absolutely necessary to man's existence and the upward progress of the human race. Since it is self-evident that civilisation has, during centuries, made progress in proportion to the production and utilisation of minerals, both precious and base, and that most of the material prosperity and comforts enjoyed by mankind are due to this progress, it is highly fitting and proper that the men who are engaged in the hazardous and unhealthy occupations of mining, milling, smelting, and reduction of ores, should receive a just compensation for their labours, which shall be proportionate to the dangers connected therewith, and such protection from law as will remove needless risk to life or health, and for the purpose of bringing about and promoting these and other proper and lawful ends, and for the general welfare of ourselves, families, and dependant ones, we deem it necessary to organise and maintain the N.Z. Federation of Miners, and among our lawful purposes we declare more especially our objects to be:—

1. For the purpose of securing the return of members to Parliament pledged to support and carry out the policy of Labour. The objective decided upon is "The socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange," and the method at present adopted towards that end is the return of members pledged to support a Labour group, which shall be quite distinct from any other political party. All members returned to be controlled by a Labour Representation Committee. The attitude towards any other political party shall be that of independence, unless the party or the government is engaged upon measures likely to affect the interests of the workers or the objective of the committee, when, of course, the measure will be supported or opposed accordingly.

2. To cultivate an acquaintance with our fellows, in order that we may be better enabled to form an undivided opposition to acts of injustice, and that immediate steps be taken to bring about a Federation of Workers of the whole Dominion, and that it be incumbent upon the Executive of this Federation to carry the same into effect.

3. To secure compensation fully commensurate with the dangers of our employment, and the right to use our earnings free from the dictation of any person whomsoever.

4. To secure legislation giving compulsory preference to unionists, and in all lawful ways to co-operate with one another for the purpose of procuring a just share of the profits of our toil, to shorten the hours of labour, and the mutual advancement in order that the general welfare of the members and their families may be steadily advanced and promoted.

5. To maintain a spirit of fraternal sympathy with the workers of all other countries.

6. To use our united efforts to discourage the contract labour and bonus systems, and as soon as possible to abolish same, believing the said systems to be detrimental to the best interests of organised labour.

7. To enable and provide for the Federation to own, publish and control a weekly labour newspaper.

At this conference a resolution was submitted reading as follows: "That this conference is in favour of registering under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act." This resolution was withdrawn in favour of the following: "This conference affirms the principles of arbitration and conciliation as laid down by Hon. W. P. Reeves in the Bill of 1894, and that the question of registration be held over till conference meets in Wellington, on October 19th inst."

THE N.Z. CONFERENCE

Between August and October, 1908, Miners' Unions all over N.Z. were circularised, with the result that when the conference assembled in Wellington on October 19, there were 11 Unions represented with a total membership of 4,259. Except for the non-attendance of Otago, it was a very representative gathering. The decisions of the Greymouth

Conference were endorsed with but few amendments, and these being of only a minor nature.

This Conference appointed Mr. P. J. O'Regan, Federation attorney, and in the years that followed his counsel and guidance was of immeasurable benefit to the Federation and its membership. His representations on the Federation's behalf before Parliamentary Committees resulted in many amendments and additions to the Workers' Compensation Act, the Mining Act, etc.

The officers elected were as follows:—President, R. Semple; vice-president, H. T. Armstrong; secretary, R. Manning; treasurer, J. J. Scanlon; executive, Messrs. Dowgray, Foster and Fry.

An attempt was made to register the Federation under the I.C. and A. Act, but again we were successful in defeating the proposal, and were finally able to carry a resolution that registration be effected under the Trades Union Act.

The Conference appointed P. H. Hickey to visit Otago for the purpose of enrolling the Miners' Unions there into the Federation. I visited Green Island, Alexandra, Kaitangata, Waioruni, Nightcaps, and Glentunnel (Canterbury), and in each place received an encouraging hearing. Later, the Otago miners joined up, but so far as Kaitangata was concerned it was never a source of strength to the Federation.

THE FEDERATION'S BAPTISM

The Federation's baptism of fire followed closely on the October Conference. Owing to an amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act, which made provision for compensation for "Industrial Diseases,"

the mining companies around Reefton insisted upon a medical examination of all employees as a condition of re-employment following the Christmas holidays. This caused considerable resentment, and a lock-out took place. Mr. Semple visited Reefton, and stiffened the miners opposition and, together with Mr. O'Regan, who was on a visit to Reefton at the time, was successful in preventing this indignity being perpetrated upon the metal miners of the Reefton area.

The Reefton mine-owners, during the period of the lock-out, quite logically pointed out that the Westport Coal Co., in its mines at Denniston and Millerton, had introduced the medical inspection of prospective employees, and that the Federation or the Unions had not offered any resistance. So having cleaned up Reefton, the Federation now turned its attention to the Buller, and after a very brief battle, had the indignity removed from that district also.

These two contests proved a splendid advertisement for the Federation, and from then on it made itself felt as an industrial force in N.Z.

About this time the Newcastle, N.S.W., miners downed tools, and, through levies and contributions, £3,600 was forwarded for their assistance. This strike was made famous through the imprisonment of the strike officials, including Peter Bowling, and the passing of legislation of a "leg-iron" character.

In addition to generous financial support, the Federation refused to allow coal to be taken out of New Zealand.

I find, for instance, the following resolution in the minutes: "That, in the event of the mine-owners attempting to fleece the public by raising

the price of coal during the present crisis, drastic steps will be taken to prevent the consumers from being exploited."

Another interesting resolution following a communication from Mr. Pryor, secretary, Employers' Federation, reads: "That the secretary be instructed to wire Mr. Pryor re supplying Tyser line: That in the event of the Westport Co. attempting to supply the Tyser line or any other outside order, the Executive will be compelled to take drastic steps to prevent the same, and declines to grant the request."

Still a further resolution: "That we emphatically protest against any coal being shipped out of N.Z. or the filling of any orders that would tend to interfere with the bonds of unity existing between the Australian and N.Z. Unionists."

Later, the following cable was dispatched to the released miners' officials: "The N.Z. Federation of Labour tenders heartiest congratulations on release of comrades, trusts persecution received has added to your determination to fight for overthrow of capitalism."

This wider aspect of Unionism and the tendency to regard all labour questions from the viewpoint of class rather than craft was from its very earliest days characteristic of the Federation.

PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES

Not only did its active workers preach a policy of industrial unity, but an opportunity was never missed by the Federation's officials to utilise the services of capable exponents of working-class philosophy at any stage of its existence. Indeed, in the

days that preceded its existence, speakers of repute were invited to tour the Coast under the auspices of the Unions.

The first of these was Mr. Ben Tillett, who visited the Grey and Buller districts, whose message was eagerly assimilated by the inquiring minds. At a later date, Mr. Tom Mann visited New Zealand, and, under the auspices of the Unions and Socialist groups, lectured in various centres, visiting the mining towns of the Coast as well.

At a later stage, whilst in Sydney, I met for the first time Mr. H. Scott Bennett, then lecturing for the Sydney Socialist Party, and asked him if he would consider a N.Z. visit. He replied in the affirmative. It was on the occasion of this Sydney visit that I met for the first time Mr. H. E. Holland, now Labour Party leader. At a later date, Mr. Bennett came to New Zealand, and toured the country under the Federation's auspices. In the succeeding years much splendid educational work was carried on by him, and numerous tours of the Dominion were undertaken under the Federation's auspices. Some years later, the Federation, in co-operation with the Waihi Union, invited Mr. H. E. Holland to visit New Zealand—a step which has had a very profound influence on the Labour Movement of Maoriland.

When Peter Bowling, at that time President of the Northern Miners' Federation, New South Wales, was released from prison, the Federation invited him to New Zealand to speak on its behalf. In those days Peter was regarded as an uncompromising rebel against the existing order, and one whose achievements had been widely advertised throughout the press. Peter

as a lecturer was not a success. His indifferent platform ability, coupled with an insufferable egotism, did not add to his appeal to the public. I well remember Semple, who was instructed to accompany Peter on his tour, raising very strenuous objections to being asked to act as guide to similar personages in the future. Peter's tour fell flat, and it was whilst in New Zealand that he received word that he was deposed as President of the Newcastle Miners.

Bowling never appeared to regain his punch after this defeat, and although he was for a time afterwards general secretary, Illawarra Miners' Federation, N.S.W., he was later defeated for that position, and gradually drifted into obscurity, only to emerge during the war period, definitely in the enemy's camp.

In the work of education each Union played its part. Affiliations were encouraged to purchase propaganda literature for distribution among members, in addition to which the Federation itself undertook a similar task.

The culminating point in this work of enlightenment was reached when our small Federation, few in numbers though it may have been, lacking in experience in the task confronting it, but with great enthusiasm and almost unanimously, decided to embark upon the publication of a weekly labour paper.

THE FEDERATION AND ITS OFFICIALS

The 1909 Conference decided that, since the Trades Councils had done nothing to bring about closer unity, that the name of the Federation be changed from the Federation of Miners to a Federation of Labour; and it is under the latter title that it made history in New Zealand. In conformity

with this wider policy, greater activity was decided upon, and Mr. R. Semple was appointed organiser for New Zealand, and took up his duties early in 1910. His salary was £4 a week, second-class railway fares, and 8s. a day allowance when away from home. The position of President, vacated by Mr. Semple, was filled by Mr. P. C. Webb.

Shortly after his appointment, the rather unpleasant task devolved upon the organiser of relieving the Secretary of his books, and the Executive appointed Mr. J. Glover to fill the vacancy, a position he retained until the Federation merged into the reconstructed body of 1913.

And never was an organisation more faithfully served secretarially. And never was there a more loyal comrade. Amid a sea of impetuosity, Jack floated calmly on his way, never bustled, never excited, doing his job and doing it well, even when the tempest raged most fiercely. We used to joke about Jack and his books, the tradition being that he slept with them. Jack was our cashier, too. Wherever we were and funds were running low, the decision was a unanimous one: "Send a wire to Glover"; and as prompt as the message could be, back came the cash.

The Federation's Treasurer at this time was John Dowgray, of Granity. I met John for the first time on the occasion of the first Miners' Conference in Wellington. He had but recently arrived from Scotland, where he held high office in the Scottish and British Miners' Federations. I remember one of Jack's opponents writing sneeringly to the press that "Dowgray landed on the Westport wharf with 15s. in his pocket and with two tons of books." I did not know his financial position at the time, but

I did know that his critic was correct regarding Jack's library. Quite recently I had the pleasure of looking over his bookshelves again, one of the finest private libraries I have ever seen, and am certain that ten, rather than two, tons would adequately express its weight to-day.

It may have been owing to his nationality that Jack was appointed Treasurer; but whatever the reason, the Federation had in him a very capable official. For Dowgray possessed a keen and well-balanced mind. His judgment was at all times tempered with caution, and his wide administrative experience made him an invaluable officer.

Others who helped to make the Federation were men like J. Fulton, of Huntly, a bluff, outspoken Yorkshireman who never knew defeat, but was always ready to "come again." No policy could be too radical for Jim; he just thrived on the militancy of the movement. And though, in later years, the employers victimised him with particular venom, he took his medicine like the man he was.

Then there was Mark Fagan, of Reefton, an Australian with a wide and varied mining experience. As Secretary of the Inangahua Miners he played a big part in amending legislation for the protection of the lives of the metal miners. Though inclined to sit back in the breeching while many others felt disposed to indulge in a gallop, Mark, nevertheless, was an influence in the movement, and one whose opinion was always worth while.

I recall, too, two splendid comrades from Otago—W. (Bill) Hollows, from Green Island, and R. (Bob) Ridd, of Kaitangata. Both these men kept abreast of the Federation's forward policy, and in this respect were well ahead of the organisations they represented.

Stockton's representative in those days was burly Dan Alexander, who learnt his economics as an I.L.P. member adjacent to the Clyde, and who carried with him to his Union activities the Marxian philosophy he then acquired.

Denniston's representative after the departure of J. Foster, was the late Jim Fisher—an outspoken, fearless advocate of the miners' cause. For many years he occupied a position on the Federation's Executive, and his vote and voice was always for progress.

Waihi's outstanding contribution to the Federation was W. E. Parry (now M.P., Auckland Central). Like so many other active Federationists, Parry is an Australian, and followed metal mining for many years. When elected President of the Waihi Miners, his grasp of the Labour Movement was not profound, but he immediately set to work to acquire the knowledge essential to his work, and acquire it he did. In after years he displayed a capacity for organisation that resulted in the Waihi Miners' Union becoming one of the most militant bodies in the Federation. Their fight against injustice will last as long as working-class history endures.

I mentioned "Tim" Armstrong's name before. After leaving Waihi, he settled on the West Coast, and took the same keen and able interest in the movement that was always an outstanding characteristic of him. He was always a member of the Federation Executive, and his voice was one that fashioned our policy in the direction of militant propaganda and action. In those earlier years Tim and myself were about the only New Zealanders who took anything like a prominent part in the Federation's numerous activities.

I mention these few names (there are a score or more that should be mentioned if justice was done those earlier campaigners) to show the type of men that the insurgent forces at work in New Zealand's Unionism brought to the surface.

To pursue a policy of constructive agitational, educational and administrative work, no matter how intelligent the rank and file may be, is only possible if capably directed. And what I do claim for the Federation is that its affiliated membership appointed as its officers men who were capable of undertaking any task that came their way and had courage enough to see it through, no matter how beset with difficulties the way. They were fortified in their work by the certain conviction that they had behind them the unwavering support of the entire Federation membership.

I make a further claim on their behalf, and that is that there was never a better-balanced team in the Labour Movement in this or any other country. There were all the elements that made for dash and daring, tempered with a caution that made what might appear reckless and unplanned attack to be revealed as well-thought-out strategy.

In those days we were all in deadly earnest. We were often accused of being fanatical. Perhaps to some extent we were. Certainly, we were intolerant in many respects. We were so convinced that our tactic was right that it was inconceivable to us that any intelligent worker could possibly do other than rally to our cause.

Undoubtedly our earnestness and dogmatism were factors which were responsible for our strength. Unless a delegate was a Socialist and Industrial Unionist he received but scant consideration

from us. Something more than eloquence was required to command respect—there must be knowledge as well, and that of the right order. Another characteristic of the Federations's leading spirits was their sobriety. Whilst retaining a wholesome contempt for what is commonly known as "wowserism," nevertheless these men were most temperate. Most of them were non-smokers, a goodly number of them were non-drinkers, and those who did take a "spot" confined their imbibing to "bobs in" or "West Coasters," as the delegates from other parts of N.Z. termed them. In all the conferences I attended I never remember seeing a delegate under the influence of liquor.

THE FEDERATION AND POLITICS.

Certain fundamental principles were insisted upon at all times. These can briefly be described as our insistence upon the failure of craft unionism; our insistence that compulsory arbitration was a crippling influence, and must be destroyed; and our general emphasising of the fact that the future of the working-class was wrapped up in themselves—that it was from them and them alone that any real advance could come. In short, we preached a doctrine of self-reliance, a policy to which the Labour Movement of to-day could, with advantage, revert.

Politically, we were inclined, if the truth must be told, to sit on the fence. Our policy in this connection was never very clearly defined. It is true that the Greymouth Conference referred to the need of independent political action on the part of the working-class, and at a subsequent date certain "demands" were adopted indicating what legislative enactments were considered necessary to make

smoother the path of the workers, nevertheless, we never seriously considered the advisability of allying ourselves with any particular political party.

It is true, of course, that most of us were members of the N.Z. Socialist Party, and that the members of that party, generally speaking, accorded us their support; but even that party we eyed with some suspicion when it came to contesting Parliamentary seats.

Political parties and politicians we frankly regarded as rather spineless organisations and individuals who were so amenable to pressure that the reforms desired could be wrung from them quite as easily as from some more definitely Labour group.

The old school of Unionist used to charge the Federation with being anti-Parliamentarian. This charge, of course, was not true, for there never was an opportunity missed of bringing under ministerial notice the urgent need of this or that reform, all of which we realised could only be achieved by legislative enactment; and, in passing, it may be recorded that, in this connection, we were decidedly successful in securing many reforms of a lasting character.

Perhaps the most adequate description of our outlook would be to say that we felt that no political party was sufficiently worth while to warrant us surrendering any of our many activities into its keeping. We were justly proud of the splendid spirit of the Federation's membership, and just a bit jealous, perhaps, lest politicians, in their scrambling for votes, would obscure those issues which we regarded as being of front-rank importance. The class war was recognised as no intangible thing to be only referred to in whispers and among friends. We proclaimed it from the house-tops.

The 1912 Conference, however, did agree to permit the Unions affiliated to take political action, as the following resolution will show: "That, for the purpose of contesting elections, the Branches in the area involved may set up an election committee prepared to conform with the objective of the N.Z.F.L., and proceed to select a candidate and run the same; said candidate must be a financial member of the Federation, also a wage-worker. The Federation to be in no way responsible financially or otherwise."

THE FEDERATION AND TRADES COUNCILS.

From the years 1910 to 1913 (three years of stress and storm in the Labour Movement of New Zealand) there was a distinct widening of the breach between the Federation and the Trades Councils. When the Federation was first established in Greymouth there was a likelihood of the Trades and Labour Councils taking definite action in the direction of forming a Federation of all workers. As was customary with this body, nothing definite was done.

Just how or why the extraordinary antagonism arose between the Federation and Trades Councils officials it is not easy to determine. For many years, indeed dating from the time of their establishment, the Trades Councils were the only organisations that made any pretence of dealing with national questions affecting organised Labour, but it cannot be denied that the officials of that group, more particularly in Wellington, displayed an animus against the Federation's activities that bordered on the splenetic. It is also true, however, that the Federation officials did not run away from these attacks. As a matter of fact, they were met more than half-way, and the retaliation was vigorous and pointed to a degree.

Much valuable time was wasted in these recriminations, which reached their height when Professor W. T. Mills, of America, arrived in New Zealand, and constituted himself aggressor-in-chief for the Trades and Labour Councils. But even the doughty Professor was kept on the defensive by the very determination of our onslaughts and the Dominion-wide co-operation of the rank and file of the Federation.

In his organising and propaganda work, Mr. Semple was very frequently unsparing of his criticism of the craft union and its official. His forceful personality, his fiery eloquence, and his extraordinary capacity for illustration, stung many a reactionary official to the quick, what time it arrested the attention and won the approval of the inquiring minds in the rank and file of the unions. And when, following on this propaganda, there came a wide-scale literature distribution, it could have only one result. In almost every union in New Zealand there was an enthusiastic band of Federation supporters.

The 1910 Conference received a letter from the Dominion Executive of the Trades and Labour Councils asking that a deputation be received from that body to discuss the question of unity. It was decided, after a lengthy discussion, that the Federation meet representatives of the Trades and Labour Council. This meeting took place in Christchurch. The Federation delegates were: Messrs. Webb, Semple, Glover, and Hickey; the Trades and Labour Council being represented by Messrs. J. A. McCullough, J. Young, R. Whiting, and J. T. Paul.

The delegates exchanged views all day without anything being done, and parted in the most friendly manner. The Trades Council would not accept our

from of organisation, and since we could not possibly entertain theirs, an impasse was inevitable. The Trades Councils could not agree to any departure from the annual capitation of 1d. per year. With this sum the absurdity of attempting to build a national organisation was evident to the Federation's representatives, if not to those of the Trades Councils. The Federation's capitation was 4s. per year. This amount, it was felt, was hardly enough to cover the expenses of a virile organisation.

At every subsequent conference of the Federation, representatives of either the Trades Councils or the Political Labour Party waited upon delegates, and although there was nothing approaching an agreement arrived at, these delegations, nevertheless, had the effect of keeping alive the need of an understanding between the two bodies.

THE " MAORILAND WORKER " IS ESTABLISHED

The 1910 Conference, on a motion submitted by the West Coast Workers' Union, decided to consider the question of establishing a weekly Labour paper. Hitherto every attempt in this direction had failed. Auckland, Dunedin and Wellington were all strewn with the wrecks of Labour papers. That we could possibly fail never entered our heads. Of course, we knew nothing about the technical side of a paper, but that did not deter us in the slightest. It was decided that the name of the paper should be " The Labour Leader," and that it should have a red cover. These matters were decided before the question of finance was considered. The resolution establishing the paper reads as follows: " That a Board be set up, and that a circular be drafted and

sent out to each affiliated union, together with a dummy newspaper, appealing for support for this object, and that the organiser proceed to each union affiliated, and that, in the event of £1,500 being forthcoming the committee be empowered to proceed."

The only objection came from the Waihi delegates, who desired the project postponed till the following year.

I was instructed to cable R. S. Ross, of Melbourne, asking him whether or not he would be prepared to undertake editorial control. Mr. Ross replied agreeing to accept the position should it be offered to him.

A further resolution was carried that a Board of seven be set up, including President and Secretary; three to be elected from conference, and two experts from outside Conference. Messrs. Semple, Dowgray, and Hickey were elected to represent Conference, and Messrs. Hogg and Kraig were elected as the experts. What qualifications as experts either of these two gentlemen possessed I do not know, but evidently we imagined at that time that a journalist was au fait with the mechanical side of the printing trade.

Whilst Conference was in session, Mr. M. Laracy, then secretary, N.Z. Shearers' Union, waited upon delegates and informed them that his organisation had decided to launch a monthly issue of a paper to be called "The Maoriland Worker." The paper was to be published in Christchurch and edited by Miss Ettie Rout, a lady who, as lecturer and author, has since that time won considerable fame in Britain.

Mr. Laracy asked that the Federation co-operate with the Shearers' Union in the production of one paper. We fully discussed the suggestion with Mr. Laracy, and eventually it was agreed that the Federation guarantee its proportionate share of the cost of three issues, and that at the end of that time the matter be further considered. This decision forced our hands to some extent, and was later on to make our task more difficult than it would otherwise have been through our premature advent into the newspaper world.

The conditions laid down to the Shearers' Union in return for the Federation's support of "The Maoriland Worker" were that the paper must advocate the policy of the Federation and that the Shearers' Union would have to ballot its members on the question of joining the Federation of Labour.

At the end of the third issue of the paper the members of the Paper Board met the Shearers' Executive in Christchurch. So far as the shearers were concerned, their financial position would not allow of them carrying on any further. Their career as newspaper proprietors had ended. In fact, if it had not been for the generosity of the Federation, they would have been finished after the first issue.

The Federation's representatives offered to take over the paper as it stood, less the shearers' liabilities, shift it to Wellington, and appoint its own editor. To this the strongest possible objection was raised, particularly by Mr. Laracy, who wanted the same representation as the Federation on the Board of Management without contributing to the paper's capital account. We wrangled for two or three days, and eventually submitted our ultimatum to the shearers to either accept our proposals or we would

withdraw our support from the paper. Since the shearers could not possibly carry on, they were compelled to accept our terms.

We immediately cabled to Mr. Ross offering him the editorship of the paper; Mr. Ross wired his acceptance; and from that time can be definitely dated our control of the paper.

THE PAPER IS ESTABLISHED

In Bob Ross the Federation was fortunate in securing the services of a propaganda journalist unequalled in Australasia. His early training in Queensland, together with his journalistic experience in Broken Hill, where he edited the "Barrier Truth," familiarised him with militant unionism. From the very first issue he edited, he seemed to gauge the psychology of those with whom he was associated. The demand for the paper grew and grew. Throughout New Zealand enthusiastic workers pushed its sales. The editor built up a band of never-failing voluntary correspondents all over the country. A strong advocate of industrial unionism, an internationalist of penetrating vision, a pacifist to the backbone, but a fighter to the remotest depths of his frail figure, Bob Ross aroused working-class enthusiasm to a pitch it had never reached before or since.

As his sub-editor, I saw more of Bob than most, and frequently used to marvel at the mildness of manner of this retiring little journalist whose writing caused uproar throughout the land.

Ross, with a thumb and finger under his chin, a guileless expression on his face, and in the mildest tone imaginable, would give expression to the most startling and revolutionary suggestions. I have no-

ticed the faces of visitors, who, seeing Bob for the first time, wearing a look of most profound disappointment. This was the Bob Ross whose writings they had read—a keen sense of disillusionment could be detected in their manner. Bob would chat with them for a time, and they would leave with all doubt of the editor's fighting capacity removed from their minds.

Of the ups and downs of the paper I do not intend to deal with at the present time. There were periods when we wondered whether the current issue would be our last. Time after time we grazed the rocks, but lost nothing more than a bit of paint. On one occasion I well remember the owner of the building we were occupying was, quite naturally, demanding his rent. There was no money to pay it. There was a very serious little conclave in the editor's office between Ross, Semple, and myself. The outlook was as black as it could possibly be. The end seemed to be, not in sight, but right here. We discussed the situation at length—it appeared hopeless. Suddenly Semple jumped to his feet, and said: "I'll go and buy the building." Away he went, and came back with the information that the owner was agreeable to sell, and that he would forego the rent owing, and that he (Semple) had agreed that the Federation would purchase it. "We'll have to find the money somewhere," he said. "We have a couple of weeks in which to do it." Bob found the money, a deposit was paid on the building, and we breathed freely again.

How much the paper really owes to Semple has never been made public. He borrowed money from his personal friends, with no other security than his word of honour; he pleaded with the unions to put

additional money into the venture; and, in addition, brought to the office hundreds of pounds' worth of advertisements every year.

After an unfortunate experience on the managerial side, the Federation Executive placed J. Glover in charge, and since that time he has retained his grip on the business side of the paper.

THE FEDERATION AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

Whilst the active Federationists advocated Industrial Unionism and continually spoke of One Big Union, there never was a serious effort made to transform the Federation into an Industrial Union.

We adopted, with certain alterations, the I.W.W. preamble, around which, wherever the English language is spoken, there have been waged some mighty verbal battles. The endorsement of the I.W.W. preamble resulted in some very spirited attacks upon us from the reactionary Labour officials. This attempt at "Americanising" New Zealand's unionism (as it was termed) met with their bitter opposition, and in the campaign which ensued, and which at times developed into a virulence rather difficult to imagine in these placid days, they received the unanimous backing of the press. I do not remember a daily paper ever publishing a single statement in the Federation's favour. This antagonism on the part of the press and reactionary officials only convinced us more than ever that our attitude was the correct one.

In the work of administration, the Executive, between conferences, had unlimited power, although Conference was the supreme authority. The

Executive's decisions were to all intents and purposes final. It had authority to call strikes, impose levies, and do all those things that is so frequently left to a membership vote.

This centralising of power gave to the Federation a mobility that was a source of strength. Everyone knew of the power which the Executive possessed, and also knew that there would be an unhesitating response on the part of the membership to any calls that might be made upon it.

They also knew that the Executive would not hesitate to exercise its authority should the occasion warrant it. Whilst the Executive held and exercised this power, its decisions were always fully explained to the members and, without exception, were practically unanimously endorsed.

Provision was made in the Federation's constitution for industrial departments, but nothing was every done to establish a unionism to cover them.

One of the reasons, I believe, why there was a marked disinclination to interfere with the existing method was that there was an idea that any re-arrangement of the Federation that would interfere with the powers of the central authority would make for weakness rather than strength.

In later years in Australia when agitation was rife around the question of the O.B.U., influenced by my Federation experience, I used to argue that it was not "forms of organisation," but "the spirit of the organisation" that really counted.

And I submit as an unanswerable argument that the nearest approach of the spirit of the One Big Union that the lands of the Southern Cross have ever seen was the N.Z. Federation of Labour. For forms of organisation, not matter how perfect the forms

may be, that in a crisis fails to function, is as useless as the greatest medley of craft unionis it is possible to imagine.

In the days of which I write, I am correct in saying that miners, no matter whether coal or metal, labourers, watersiders, etc., comprising the Federation, did not think of themselves as miners (and these divided into two groups), labourers or watersiders, but as Federationists, and that it was to the Federation—that is, to their class—that they owed allegiance and not to the particular craft union of which they were directly members. They thought in terms of the Federation and of the working-class as a whole; and that, I imagine, accounts for the almost passionate attachment of thousands of workers to the Federation.

THE FEDERATION AT WORK.

Should a dispute arise in any given locality, the Executive would invite representatives of the union affected to meet them and, if possible, arrive at a solution of the difficulty. Whatever the decision might be, the final acceptance was always left to the men affected to decide whether or not it met with their approval.

Quite early in its career the Federation demanded a Royal Commission to inquire into the sanitation and ventilation of mines. It hammered at this idea until the then Minister (Hon. R. McKenzie) decided to set up a commission, but appointed the two miners' representatives without consulting the Federation. The Federation immediately demanded the withdrawal of the two gentlemen appointed, and insisted that its nominees (Messrs. J. Dowgray and W. E. Parry) should constitute the miners' representatives on the commission.

All over New Zealand the unions took the matter up, and resolutions of protest poured into the Minister, with the additional intimation that should the Government persist with the commission as constituted it would be boycotted by the miners.

These protests convinced the Minister that it was useless to proceed unless the personnel of the commission was changed, and it was changed accordingly. The commission travelled the Dominion, and much valuable evidence was heard, and as a result suggestions made that had a very important influence upon mining legislation.

During these years many disputes were handled. Strikes at the State Mine, Auckland General Labourers, mining disputes both north and south, threatened strike of Auckland Tramwaymen—all had a satisfactory ending. Wage agreements were being signed in many industries, all at an advance on the previous rates. These advances, which were being refused by the Arbitration Court, and the tendency of employers, under pressure, to grant wage increases and agree to conditions which the Court curtly refused, had the effect of directing public attention to the scurvy treatment accorded the workers who were members of unions registered under the I.C. and A. Act by that body, and as a result of the storms of protest raised, compelled the Court to display a little more consideration for those who approached it.

It was by no means an uncommon occurrence to find unions passing resolutions stating that unless the Court showed a greater consideration for the welfare of the members of the union that they would be compelled to join the Federation of Labour. The Federation was a club raised over the Court by

unions that were not affiliated, but who were not above using its prestige to gain their own selfish ends.

That the Federation would welcome those who merely joined in a spirit of pique or to "get even" with the Court, is doubtful. That some disgruntled unions did join there is no gainsaying, but these, like all others, were not admitted unless a ballot of members showed a majority in favour of linking-up.

More and more the Federation officials found their time occupied in the handling of disputes, the rectifying of grievances, and the drafting of new agreements. The detail work of the organisation kept growing at an extraordinary rate.

EXTENDING OUR FRONTIERS

Apart from the coal and metal miners, who were always the backbone of the Federation, the principal industries associated with the organisation were the Shearers (always an unstable quantity), Watersiders, Flaxworkers, and General Labourers. In addition, there were a number of smaller unions in affiliation with it.

The Shearers' Union, though it decided by a majority vote to become a part of the Federation, never appeared to assimilate the Federation spirit; this may have been due to the seasonable nature of their work making them difficult to reach, or it may have been due to the lukewarmness of the officials. In reality, it was, I would say, a little of both.

One of Organiser Semple's greatest achievements was the swinging of the waterside workers from the old-fashioned and useless Watersiders' Federation into the Federation of Labour.

A committee, consisting of Messrs. Ross, Semple, and Hickey was appointed to draft an open letter to the railway men and watersiders urging the advisability of joining the Federation—this being the first official overtures to either body. Meetings of watersiders at all the ports had already been addressed by Federation officers and members, and in some of the ports very ardent supporters were at work endeavouring to secure a vote of the membership on the question of Federation.

Westport and then Timaru came into the Federation, and then, arising out of a dispute at Timaru, and after a good deal of negotiation, a Dominion-wide conference of Waterside Workers met under the Federation's auspices, presented demands to the combined shipping companies, and with the officers of the Federation, brought about an agreement that indicated a tremendous advance on anything that preceded it.

This was the first time in the history of this calling that a settlement was arrived at outside the Arbitration Court.

One result of this agreement was the enrolment of practically all the Watersiders in New Zealand into the Federation of Labour, and the dissolving of the Waterside Federation.

The general labourers of Auckland, Canterbury, Buller and Westland were also members of the Federation.

The tendency appeared to be for the Federation to win the approval of that section of the working-class that took the keenest interest in their industrial affairs. In addition, ex-miners, members of other unions, realising the advantages their old workmates were securing through the Federation,

and usually being men who took an active interest in their union and attended the meetings, commenced an agitation within their organisations for them to join with others in fighting for better conditions.

It would be correct to say that the best organised and the most militant workers were rallying to the Federation's standard. It is a noticeable fact in Labour unionism that the hardest working men are the best unionists. Compare a coal-miner with a waiter, or a ship's fireman with a shop assistant. A comparison between a clerk and a waterside worker is not favourable to the former, and so on throughout industry.

The so-called unskilled worker is invariably a better unionist than the skilled craftsman. That is, he has less fear of his employer, is more outspoken in his utterances and in his opposition to what may be termed the pin-pricks and the thousand and one unpleasantnesses that are the lot of the average wage-worker.

And it was elements such as these, that, for the most part, comprised the Federation of Labour.

POLITICS AND STRIKES

At the General Elections of 1911, two active Federationists contested seats with the Federation's blessing. These were P. C. Webb, who challenged Sir A. R. Guinness for Grey and Speaker of the House, and P. H. Hickey, who entered the arena against Mr. H. Poland for Ohinemuri.

In both cases the candidates were defeated, though polling a substantial vote. In the Grey electorate it was a straight-out contest, the voting resulting as follows:—

Guinness 3677

Webb 2539

In Ohinemuri a second ballot was necessary (a clumsy method, now repealed), the figures being:—

Poland 3341

Hickey 2134

These two elections indicated that, apart from the industrial support accorded the Federation, there was also a marked tendency to display the same allegiance politically as well. On the death of Sir A. R. Guinness, Mr. Webb, after a strenuous contest, won the Grey seat, and retained it until his incarceration for his pacifist attitude during the war.

In the case of Ohinemuri, however, the seat was not again contested by Labour, due to the changed nature of the constituency following the great Waihi strike.

In the early part of 1912 the Federation's prestige was used with marked effect in the Tramway Strike at Wellington. The members of the Tramway Union, incensed at the action of an inspector in reporting members without cause, approached the City Council and asked for his removal. This eminently reasonable request was refused, causing very grave dissatisfaction in the service.

A strike ballot was taken on the question disclosing a majority in favour of ceasing work. This threat was not treated seriously by the Council. A still further ballot was taken—how many were taken altogether I do not know—but whatever the number the City Council refused to take them seriously, and, if the truth must be told, neither did a very large number of the tramwaymen themselves.

The press gave a great deal of publicity to these ballots, and taunted the Union for not possessing the courage to strike. That the majority of the members ever seriously entertained striking is very

questionable until I issued a circular, stating that the Federation would stand behind the tramwaymen in any action that they might take.

I had no authority whatever for issuing the circular, and in looking back on that time now, can only account for my impetuous action through my anger at the contempt displayed towards organised Labour by the City Council and the press. The leaflet (which happened to be printed on red paper, this giving the idea to the "Evening Post" that was responsible for the coining of the term "Red Federation," which was afterwards abbreviated to "Red Fed.") caused a wave of militancy to sweep through the tramway service, and a meeting was called for the p.m. shift the following day. I was invited to attend, and did so, and strongly urged a stop-work meeting to enable both shifts to be present. This suggestion was agreed to, and the a.m. shift falling into line, a meeting was arranged for 2 p.m. the following day. It was not until the tramwaymen stepped off their cars at Lambton Station at 1 o'clock and onwards on the following day that the public realised how serious the situation really was. The meeting was attended by about every employee in the service, and by a vote of 480 to nil, with four informal votes, decided not to resume work until the obnoxious inspector was removed.

A Strike Committee, consisting of representative unionists and tramwaymen, was formed, and overtures opened with the City Council for a settlement. After a couple of days, and negotiations proving unsuccessful, the then Premier (Sir J. G. Ward) asked to receive a deputation from the Strike Committee to discuss the whole question. After hearing our

case, the Premier expressed himself as being satisfied that there could not be a contented service as long as the cause for the dissatisfaction remained, and undertook to meet the City Council and impress upon it the advisability of removing the cause of the strike from contact with the members of the Union. Under pressure, this course was agreed to by the Council, and an agreement signed, embodying the conditions agreed to.

The combined unions had issued an ultimatum to the City Council that unless an agreement was reached by 12 noon on a certain Monday a general strike would be declared in Wellington. The atmosphere was electrical, and as the fatal hour came nearer and nearer, citizens began to flood the streets, and from beyond the Town Hall and along Cuba Street to Manners Street, a dense crowd had congregated. At 11.45 the Premier visited the Trades Hall, coming direct from the City Council meeting with proposals for a settlement. I have often wondered since whether the threatened general strike would really have taken place had negotiations proved unavailing.

“ TO HELL WITH AGREEMENTS ”

During the early part of 1912 a controversy took place on the subject of industrial agreements that attracted very wide attention. This controversy was waged around the question whether or not a union signing an agreement with the employers was, by that act, to refrain from assisting in any industrial struggle during its currency. A section of the Federation imagined that once a union entered into an agreement with a group of employers this action

freed those concerned from any participation in any strike or other industrial effort during the period covered.

This viewpoint was very vigorously combatted in a series of contributions by a number of correspondents in "The Maoriland Worker," headed by myself. The view we expressed, and vigourously expressed too, was that no award or agreement, no matter what its nature, should prevent a union taking any action likely to assist its fellows in times of industrial revolt. Organised scabbery was a rock upon which organisations had been wrecked in the past, and this danger must be avoided so far as the Federation was concerned. That there was a very grave danger of concerted action being rendered impossible if the policy of the sanctity of agreements was persisted in was apparent to every observing worker, consequently those who endeavoured to uphold that point of view were assailed with an intensity that brought forth vigorous protests from them.

In a series of letters to our paper, during the course of which I quoted every authority on Industrial Unionism that I could think of, including figures which at that time loomed large upon the horizon, men of the calibre of Haywood, Debs, De Leon, etc., I concluded with the statement that the question resolved itself in the final summing up to the issue: "Loyalty to your class or loyalty to the enemies of your class." Should that position ever arise, I urged that the Federation should "stand prepared to toss every agreement to Hell."

What a storm I brought about my ears! And how that statement was magnified by the simple method, so dear to the hearts of certain types of

journalists of divorcing a statement from its context. The phrase, "To Hell with agreements" was coined by the Wellington "Evening Post," and it furnished a fruitful source of inspiration for hack journalists over a lengthy period of years.

My point then was that the employers never surrendered their right to concerted action, no matter what the nature of an agreement might be, and that similarly the workers should not surrender their right to strike regardless of any existing agreements. There was nothing new in the suggestion; it was as old as the organised Labour Movement, and had been practised throughout the years in all countries; but, judging by the amount of ink devoted by way of attack to the articles referred to, one would imagine it was a doctrine that was being promulgated for the first time.

ESTABLISHING THE ONE BIG UNION

The 1912 Conference assembled at a very critical time in the history of the Federation.

The mining companies at Waihi, enraged at the action of the Federation in abolishing the competitive contract system, decided to launch an attack on the local Union. It is not my intention to deal with this famous strike or the lock-out on the Reefton goldfields, as it has already been fully covered in "The Tragic Story of the Waihi Strike," other than to say that the shadow of this great battle was ever present among delegates to Conference.

This representative body grappled with the question of establishing the organisation as an Industrial Union, and devoted considerable time to drafting a constitution that would make provision for industrial departments and the government of them.

The constitution agreed to make provision for eight Industrial Departments, designated as follows:

Mining Department;
Pastoral and Agricultural Department;
Transportation Department;
Construction Department;
Distributing Department;
Printing and Journalistic Department;
Public Service Department.

Under the separate headings each Department made provision for embracing the following workers: —

Industrial Department.—To include all wage workers engaged in and about mines, batteries, smelters, etc.

Pastoral and Agricultural Department.—To include shearers, musterers, shepherds, drovers, cooks, farm labourers, dairymen, butter factory workers, meat workers, market gardeners, fishermen, flaxmill workers, butchers, refrigerator workers, etc.

Transportation Department.—To include water-side workers, tramwaymen, seamen, all carters except those permanently engaged in food distribution, railwaymen, etc., etc.

Construction Department.—All workers engaged in building trades, in producing bricks, lime, cement, bush workers, sawmill workers, plane, mill, sash and door factory workers, structural ironworkers, shipwrights, electricians engaged in wiring or installing light in buildings, signwriters, painters and decorators, railway, bridge and road workers, etc.

Distribution Department.—To include all workers engaged in the distribution of commodities, warehousemen, shop assistants, carters, etc.

Manufacturing Department.—To include all workers employed in the textile manufactures, garment workers, boot and shoe workers, curriers, harness makers, tailors, etc.

Printing and Journalistic Departments.—To include all wage-workers engaged in the printing and lithographic trades, electricians and firemen, and all machinists, operators, clerks, etc.

Public Services.—To include all wage workers engaged in the Post Office, cable operators, municipal gas and electric plants, street cleaners, hospital and sanatoria workers, teachers, theatre workers, domestic servants, etc.

It was decided that the Preamble (I.W.W.) and the Constitution and Rules should not come into force until January, 1913, or at such time thereafter as the Executive considered advisable.

For reasons that will be given later this constitution was never put into operation, and the practicability of the plan of organisation drafted was never decided by the acid test of utility.

IN AUSTRALIA

Of the dark days of 1912, when the whole power of the State was placed at the disposal of the mining companies at Waihi, and organised lawlessness, backed by the police authorities, held undisputed sway, I saw nothing.

Almost as soon as Conference rose, I was dispatched to Australia for the purpose of raising funds to assist in the struggle against the mine-owners. For a time P. C. Webb was engaged in a similar task, but was subsequently recalled, and for the greater part of the time I had the Australian field to myself.

I visited the coalfields of the north and south coasts of N.S.W., addressed meetings in and around Sydney, and went as far west as Cobar and Wrightsville. In every place the response was spontaneous and generous, with the exception, I should have said, of the Trades Council of Sydney. I found a spirit of very marked hostility there, with an executive dominated by a Labour renegade, the notorious Dick Sleath, one time of Broken Hill. In all my lengthy tour of Australia, this was the only hostile reception I met with.

I visited, in addition, and in the following order, the States of West Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, and Queensland. Westralia, I travelled far and wide, and was cordially received everywhere. Organised Labour, political and industrial, rendered every possible assistance to me. "The Westralian Worker" placed its columns at my disposal, as did most of the papers in the mining fields.

Melbourne, I found on the industrial side, a marked contrast to Sydney. In the former, a splendid spirit of comradeship was in evidence, and union officials went gladly out of their way to render assistance. I met the Trades Hall Council's executive, and placed my case before them, and discovered that I had to overcome the poison laid by a person named Ingram, of Auckland, who had previously addressed the Council. I very soon settled that individual—a little word of four letters did the trick as effectively as an hour's discourse could possibly have done. I also addressed the Council, and received a splendid hearing. My keenest recollection of any individual met at that time is of Jack Curtin, then secretary of the Timber Workers' Union, and now editor of "The Westralian Worker." What a magnificent comrade he was!

I met with a splendid response from the miners of the West Coast of Tasmania. I addressed meetings in all the mining centres from Bischoff to Linda Valley. Whilst in Mt. Farrel, and only a couple of days after I had left Mt. Lyell, that fearful tragedy occurred, as a result of which a large number of men were trapped in the burning mine. Some four ex-New Zealand miners whom I had known on the West Coast, in order to spend half a day with me before I left Queenstown, changed shifts and were out of the mine when the tragedy occurred. I sometimes think that but for this action they, too, would have been among the victims of that holocaust.

In Queensland I was most cordially received, and generous helpers were not lacking to make my visit there a success. Brisbane had but recently emerged from the throes of a general strike, and with their knowledge of what a great upheaval meant my task was made much lighter than, perhaps, would otherwise have been the case.

On this tour I met some of the finest characters it would be possible for anyone to come into contact with, and established friendships which have lasted through the years that have followed.

I spent about seven months in Australia on this mission, and travelled many thousands of miles, and addressed hundreds of meetings—sometimes as many as six in one day. In all, £9,395 7s. 6d. was received from Australia towards the support of those involved.

I was in Brisbane, and about to address the delegates attending the Brisbane Trades Hall Council when I received a cable announcing the murder of

Evans and the brutalities which followed. Subsequent cables indicated that the strike was practically over, and that my mission was at an end.

Acting under instructions, I returned to Sydney and there awaited further orders, whilst the Executive in N.Z. discussed the wisdom of declaring a strike throughout the country and securing the co-operation of Australian unionists to isolate the Dominion during its currency. Having decided against any such action, and the strike being declared "off," I returned to N.Z. via Auckland. It may be of interest to those who frequently sneer at the "good time" the union representative has when engaged in work of the nature which had occupied my time in Australia, to learn that on reaching Auckland I had to borrow my train fare to Wellington from W. E. Parry.

A CALL FOR SOLIDARITY

The lesson of the Waihi strike, and the events arising therefrom, was not lost upon the Federation officials. The formation of bogus unions and the utilisation of the Labour Department to assist the employers to destroy Labour solidarity had been made manifest during the Waihi upheaval. The immediate problem to be faced, in the opinion of Federation officials, was the reorganisation of the industrial forces of Labour and the closing up of the ranks.

It was decided by the Executive, at a historic meeting held on November 24, 1912, that a conference of representatives of all unions in the Dominion should be called to consider the grave position which existed in the Labour movement. The resolution calling the conference was moved by Mr. J. Dowgray, and seconded by Mr. M. Fagan, and reads:—

“ That a manifesto be issued to all Unions affiliated and all Trade Unions and Arbitration Unions in N.Z. outlining the position and calling for a national conference for the purpose of discussing the matter and bringing force to bear upon the Government and compelling it to repeal clauses in the I.C. and A. Act giving a minority the right to coerce a majority.”

On November 27 a circular was sent out to Unions outlining the reasons for calling the conference. This circular stated, *inter alia*:—

“ In the determination to effectively grapple with the extraordinary and entirely unanticipated purposes to which Arbitration has been degraded and to settle among the Unions whether the minority or the majority of a calling shall govern, and further to solidify Union forces against the present Government, the Federation is convening a conference of Trade Unions, to be held in January next. It is believed that every Union will endeavour to be represented.”

A circular dated November 29, 1912, said, *inter alia*:

“ The chief business of conference will be to consider the difficulties and dangers confronting Trades Unionism and to agree, if possible, upon a basis of combined action that will strengthen each and all, while making for the consolidation and emancipation of the great working class.”

Again, on January 3, 1913, a further circular was dispatched to the Unions. This circular stated, *inter alia*:—

“ If Unionism, and the Labour Movement generally, is to advance in New Zealand, a vigorous campaign must be entered into to end the power of a party frankly hostile to Labour, and

to amend the anomalies of a law used to further organised blacklegism. This can be done by the organised effort of those who are in danger, and by them alone."

The response to the hand of fellowship extended by the Federation to the New Zealand Unions was extremely gratifying. On January 21, 1913, conference opened in "The Maoriland Worker" Building, Wellington, and was attended by 112 delegates representing 88 organisations.

The Federation Executive invited the Hon. John Rigg, M.L.C., to preside, an invitation that was endorsed by Conference, and readily accepted by Mr. Rigg. As chairman, Mr. Rigg won the delegates from the outset by his tact and great knowledge of procedure. At times, when the atmosphere became sultry through the clash of debate and the heated exchanges of men who had violently opposed each other for years, the chairman had only to intervene with a quiet word of advice or give a hint that the offender was somewhat astray, to ensure instant order. One would need to have attended the Conference to understand how charged with energy the atmosphere at times became, and how quickly the threatened storm subsided when the chairman spoke. I would unhesitatingly say that to Mr. John Rigg, M.L.C., as he was then, more than to any one other person, the success of the first Unity Conference was due.

I acted as Conference Secretary, and had also taken over the work of arranging the Conference from Mr. J. Glover on my return from Australia.

Conference might be divided into three distinct phases:—

The first phase was the pronouncement against the encouragement given to scab Unions by the Labour Department.

The second phase was the consideration of industrial and political organisation and the agreement upon a basis of unity.

The third phase was the decision of all branches of the Labour Movement represented at Conference to co-operate in a campaign for an all-New Zealand Congress of Labour bodies, to be held in July of that year.

THE CONFERENCE AND ARBITRATION

Mr. P. C. Webb, Federation President, outlined the reasons for calling the Conference, and related how bogus unions were established at Auckland, Waihi, Huntly, Kaitangata, and elsewhere with the connivance of the Labour Department. Unions cancelled registration under the Arbitration Act only to discover that 15 persons in the Union could re-register another union under the Act and bind hundreds of men who were members of the non-registered Union, without their knowledge or consent.

Among the delegates present was the scholarly Mr. Edward Tregear, the Grand Old Man of the New Zealand Labour Movement, and one of the most lovable characters it has ever been my lot to meet. Mr. Tregear was N.Z.'s first Secretary of Labour, and was the father of the Dominion's industrial legislation, and had endeared himself to all in the Labour Movement by his wide sympathy with and whole-hearted support of the cause of Labour.

Speaking at Conference, under stress of strong emotion, he said that he had been the devoted servant and advocate of Arbitration for 20 years,

but not the sort of Arbitration that had been in evidence lately. He did not believe that any person belonging to any body of organised Labour whatsoever could fail to deprecate the formation of Unions under the Act forwarded and advocated by employees, probably financed by employers, and used in every possible way to break up larger and stronger unions. Such attempts could not fail to be viewed with the greatest dislike and contempt.

A special committee, consisting of Messrs. Tregear, Young, Sullivan, Parry and Hickey, was appointed to consider the whole of the remits dealing with Arbitration and to report to Conference. On behalf of the committee, Mr. Tregear presented the following report:—

ARBITRATION COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Provided that when an industrial union of workers has officially applied for cancellation of its registration, as provided for in Clause 21 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, no industrial union shall be registered in that industry covered by the union which has officially applied for cancellation of its registration, unless a majority of the members of the union that has cancelled its registration express, by secret ballot, as provided by the rules of the said union, their desire so to register.

That the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act be amended so that it shall be competent for an industrial union, by resolution of a special meeting, to immediately give notice of its intention to cancel its registration, which shall be considered the official application; but before such cancellation shall be effective, it shall be in-

cumbent upon such union to satisfy the Registrar that a majority of the members desire to so cancel.

These were the two main proposals of the committee's report, and were debated at length and finally adopted without any material alteration. The somewhat ambiguous reading of the second clause was explained by Mr. Tregear, who stated that the committee had in its mind a weakness that needed to be remedied. Mr. Young, of the Seamen's Union, had explained to them the difficulty of getting out ballot papers at short notice when members were scattered about in different ports in different countries. As soon as the notice of cancellation had been received and passed at a special meeting, it should be impossible for a case to be laid in the Arbitration Court, so as to embarrass the union, but as soon as the ballot was sent out to cancel the registration, a few weeks would ensue before its return, and then the enemy had power in that interval to state a case in the Arbitration Court, which fettered a union so that it could not get its registration cancelled although the ballot was carried.

CONFERENCE WIDENS ITS SCOPE

A resolution moved by Mr. H. Hunter, of Christchurch, that an invitation be sent to the Executive of the United Labour Party to send two representatives to the Conference completely changed the whole Labour Movement of New Zealand.

The resolution was heatedly debated, and was eventually carried, although opposed most strongly by the majority of the Federation's representatives. The grounds of objection were two. One being that the Conference was industrial in character and that the presence of representatives of political bodies

was contrary to the very basis of the Conference. The other reason advanced was that the United Labour Party had used all its influence to prevent Unions sending delegates, but having seen how successful the Conference was, it now wanted to take part. That there was a great deal of truth in this contention there can be no gainsaying, but an additional factor to be remembered is that there were delegates attending the Conference who were tired of the seemingly endless wrangling in the movement, and desired to make a serious attempt to promote complete unity.

Many delegates felt—myself among them—that should the United Labour Party send Professor W. T. Mills to represent that organisation it would disrupt the Conference. This extraordinary little American had attacked the Federation of Labour with much venom. He had opposed it on every hand and had used his pen and voice in opposition to the Waihi miners during that strike. He was regarded by the Federation as a reactionary of the most dangerous type, and to ask men to sit in conference with him whom he had continually assailed seemed to court disaster.

When it became known that Mills had been appointed to attend as a U.L.P. delegate, it came near wrecking the Conference. Men declared that they would not sit with him, and branded him by epithets the reverse to complimentary. However, the Professor was a most adaptable little person, and could adjust himself to his surroundings in a really wonderful fashion, and it is only fair to say that during the Conference he did his best to arrive at a mutually satisfactory basis of unity, and that when Conference concluded he did his utmost to further the decisions arrived at.

It was also decided to invite representatives of the Socialist Party and the I.W.W. to attend. Messrs. H. E. Holland and F. R. Cooke were chosen to represent the Socialist Party, but no reply was received from the I.W.W.

A lengthy debate ensued on the question of industrial and political organisation, one section desiring one organisation for both purposes (the U.L.P. plan), and the other section insisting that there must be two distinct organisations.

The Federation point of view was upheld by Conference, and the desirability of industrial and political unity affirmed. These decisions practically ended a civil war that had raged within the movement for some years.

Perhaps it would be as well to place on record the resolution establishing industrial unity. It was moved by Mr. P. C. Webb, on behalf of the Federation of Labour, and reads:—

“That Conference affirms the necessity of one industrial organisation in the industrial field for the advancement and protection of organised Labour.”

Mr. R. S. Ross, editor, “Maoriland Worker,” submitted the resolution in favour of political unity as follows:—

“Recognising that political action is necessary and inevitable in the working-class movement, we agree to the formation of a political party for the enacting of legislation to better the condition of the working-class and ultimately to achieve its economic emancipation.”

The carrying of this remit, which the report states “was carried with much applause,” made possible the New Zealand Labour Party of to-day.

A BASIS OF UNITY

In order to give effect to the decisions of Conference it was agreed that a special committee be set up to bring down an outline of a constitution to Conference covering the decisions of Conference, and that after Conference rose the committee work out a constitution and rules to be submitted to a combined conference to be held at a future date.

The election of a committee to undertake this important work created the keenest interest, and resulted in the following delegates being chosen:— Messrs. R. S. Ross, R. Semple, P. Fraser, H. Hunter, W. T. Young, W. E. Parry, W. Belcher, H. E. Holland, W. T. Mills, P. C. Webb, E. Tregear, and P. H. Hickey. The committee, which contained seven Federationists and five U.L.P.-ers, sat all day and arrived at unanimous conclusions for the industrial and political unity of the working-class. The committee's findings for industrial unity were moved by Mr. Webb, on behalf of the committee. The report read as follows:—

INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION.

That this Conference recommends the following outline as indicating the lines along which a constitution should be drawn up by the sub-committee set up to draft a constitution to be considered, amended if necessary, and adopted by the joint Congress of unions to be held in Wellington, commencing on the first Tuesday in July, 1913. Your committee also recommends that the proposed conference to be held in July shall forthwith inaugurate the new body as a going concern.

NAME.

United Federation of Labour.

COMPOSITION.

The organisation shall be composed of actual wage-workers brought together in an organisation embodying industrial departments, each department to cover some industry such as mining, transportation, building trades, etc.

PREAMBLE.

The working-class and the employing-class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are to be found among millions of working-people, and the few, who make up the employing-class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centreing of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working-class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members, in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lock-out is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto: "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work," our watchword is: "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working-class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalism, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Knowing, therefore, that such an organisation is absolutely necessary for our emancipation, we unite under the following constitution:—

OBJECTS.

1. To secure employment of our members in preference to non-unionists; to maintain a spirit of fraternal sympathy with the workers of this and other countries by assisting them when necessary.

2. To use our united efforts to discourage the contract labour and bonus systems, and as soon as possible to abolish these, believing the said systems to be detrimental to the best interests of organised Labour.

3. To enable and provide for the Federation to own, publish and control a newspaper or newspapers.

4. To ensure to members who are proved to have been unjustly treated the support of the Federation.

5. To link up with the industrial organisations of all other countries for the achievement of international solidarity and also for more effective working-class action in time of international conflict.

6. The United Federation will always act with the end in view of securing to the workers the full product of their labour.

MANAGEMENT.

The national executive shall consist of general officers and of representatives from each industrial department, the officers to be elected by ballot of the whole organisation and the other executive officers to be elected by referendum of their respective industrial departments.

ARBITRATION.

The United Federation of Labour leaves the matter of registration, or of not registering, or of cancelling registration under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act entirely with each union; but in any case it will oppose registration of any new union to succeed any union which may have cancelled its registration, and will seek for legislation to that effect.

STRIKES.

Each union shall have power of internal government, but no union shall involve another in any strike without first placing the matter unreservedly in the hands of its department for decision, and no department shall involve the national organisation in any strike without first placing the matter unreservedly in the hands of the national

executive for decision. In the event of the national executive deciding in favour of a strike it shall give the whole power of the United Federation of Labour in support.

EXISTENT PARTIES.

That the respective executives of the New Zealand Federation of Labour and the United Labour Party be invited, while not in any way abating their own activities, to utilise their existing machinery and organisers to push forward the work of organisation on the lines agreed upon at this conference.

POLITICAL ORGANISATION.

Mr. Webb, on behalf of the committee, then submitted the political organisation report as follows:—

POLITICAL.

That this Conference recommends the following outline as indicating the lines along which a constitution should be drawn up by the sub-committee set up to draft a constitution to be considered, amended if necessary, and adopted by the joint congress of unions to be held in Wellington, commencing on the first Tuesday in July, 1913. Your committee also recommends that the proposed conference to be held in July shall forthwith inaugurate the new body as a going concern.

NAME.

Social-Democratic Party.

OBJECTIVE.

The socialisation of the collectively-used means of production, distribution and exchange.

COMPOSITION.

The party shall consist of unions, local branches, and individual members prepared to endorse the foregoing and pledge their support.

This party shall be distinct from any other party or parties, and its attitude towards any other party or parties shall be that of independence.

PRINCIPLES.

That the sub-committee be instructed to draft a declaration of principles.

PLATFORM.

The sub-committee shall prepare a platform which shall include the usual legislative proposals of organised Labour in this country, including a consideration of wages and hours, together with such matters as land, industrial, and commercial monopolies, the initiative and referendum, the recall and proportional representation.

EXISTENT PARTIES.

That the respective executives of the New Zealand Federation of Labour, the United Labour Party, and the Socialist Party be invited, while not in any way abating their own activities, to utilise their existing machinery and organisers to push forward the work of organisation on the lines agreed upon at this Conference.

The decision of Conference in affirming, without amendment, the committee's reports, aroused great enthusiasm among delegates, and was greeted with cheers.

ORGANISING THE UNITY CONGRESS

The period between the Conferences of January and July was marked by a great agitational campaign throughout New Zealand. Meetings were held all over the country, literature widely distributed, and circulars by the thousands were dispatched to unions and other Labour organisations, as well as to individuals.

As secretary, I had a particularly strenuous time, for, in addition to my work as sub-editor, I kept two typists busy on the work of

the Unity Committee. Just how hard the Wellington members of the committee worked has never been made known. Day after day we sat and drafted, amended, and rejected rules, platforms, constitutions and declaration of principles. Discussion at times seemed endless. A point of difference was debated till some mutually satisfactory basis was reached. I find in a statement subsequently submitted to the July Congress that I stated that the committee had not only received thousands of communications, but that 50,000 bulletins had been sent out and over 6,000 letters and circulars had been dispatched. Members of the committee alone addressed over 150 meetings in different parts of the country, and when the enthusiasm of that period is recalled it would be safe to say that the number of meetings held in support of unity must have been one thousand at the very least.

The whole of the time of Mr. Semple, Federation organiser, was devoted to furthering the campaign, and in all Federation centres our organisation was unstintingly used to promote a successful conference in July.

One great loss to the Federation and to the Unity Committee was the resignation of R. S. Ross, from the editorship of "The Maoriland Worker" and from the Unity Committee and his departure for Australia. To me this decision of Bob's was little short of a tragedy, not only because of his capacity as a working-class exponent, but also because of the very close personal association between us.

The Federation Executive appointed H. E. Holland to the editorship, a position he filled with conspicuous ability until his election to Parliament, except for a short break of a few months whilst he was "in residence on the Terrace."

Meanwhile the work of organisation was proceeded with and everything pointed to a highly-successful gathering on July 1, 1913.

THE UNITY CONGRESS

Of the last week in June, 1913, it could be truly said that all roads led to Wellington. How effectively the work of organising had been carried on between January and July can be judged from the fact that when Conference assembled the Unity Committee had received advice from 247 different organisations intimating that they would be represented at Congress. Credentials were received from no less than 391 delegates, representing 61,000 organised workers. It was such a Conference as one sees only once in a lifetime, and indicated the enormous amount of interest aroused throughout New Zealand.

Again, the Hon. J. Rigg was asked to preside, and he carried out his work in a superb manner, and controlled the huge gathering as easily as if it were a small committee meeting.

Credit must, of course, be given to the delegates for their observance of the strict rules of debate, but he would have been a very courageous soul indeed who would have run counter to the rulings of that quiet, soft-spoken chairman.

Seated on the platform on the chairman's right, I used to be highly amused at the efforts on the part of delegates to catch the chairman's eye. One would notice delegates' eyes fixed upon a speaker, and, as they imagined he was concluding his address, they would crouch forward, muscles tense, toes firmly resting on the floor, attempting to rivet the chair-

man with one eye whilst the other watched the speaker, and as soon as there was a motion to resume his seat a score of delegates would spring into the air, shouting "Mr. Chairman." Imagine the competition between three and four hundred delegates and nearly half of them wanting to speak on every subject!

Mr. Rigg used to try and distribute the speeches all over the room. He would ask me to watch one side of the room and to inform him if any delegates there had jumped to their feet, meanwhile keeping an eye on the opposite side himself. Sometimes he would remark to me that we had not had a speech from such and such a section for some time, and for me to keep an eye open for any delegate there that was desirous of speaking. As chairman, he knew no party and took no sides; the only preference he ever gave was when a member of the Unity Committee arose to give reasons why certain proposals had been decided by them.

Congress lasted ten days, and at the conclusion of its deliberations had established as going concerns the United Federation of Labour and the Social Democratic Party.

It speaks volumes for the work of the Unity Committee to be able to state that the constitution, rules, by-laws and declaration of principles submitted to Congress were adopted without material alteration, except that the suggested Preamble of the United Federation of Labour was knocked out and the following inserted as Object No. 1.

"To organise systematically and scientifically upon an industrial union basis, in order to assist the overthrow of the capitalist system, and thus bring about a Co-operative Commonwealth, based upon industrial democracy."

UNITY ESTABLISHED

Congress had not been long in session before it was seen that there was an element present that was not prepared to accept the Unity Committee's recommendations or, so far as one could judge, were prepared to agree to any other basis than one of such an innocuous type as to be utterly useless to the working-class.

This element fought hard and for a time looked likely to stonewall Congress and prevent anything being done. Perhaps with a less-experienced chairman they might have succeeded, but as soon as it became evident that organised obstruction was threatened the chairman handled the obstructionists till they were as helpless as babes.

As was to be expected, there were some withdrawals from Congress, among them being Mr. Geo. Fowlds, of Auckland, whose single-tax susceptibilities were upset through some reference to the class war. Mr. D. McLaren also found the atmosphere too militant for his sensitive soul, and withdrew later to find a job as handy man with the "Welfare League." When Conference rose, Mr. McLaren, financed from some mysterious source, toured N.Z. addressing meetings in opposition to the U.F.L. and S.D.P., but even in those days his bona fides were doubted, and he received but scant consideration from the unions. Mr. Withy with other single-taxers followed in the footsteps of their chief, with the railwaymen's delegates in close attendance.

Congress, having survived the loss of these elements, continued with the work of unity, and although at times feeling ran high and exchanges became pointed, every decision arrived at made for progress.

During the course of Congress, the gaoling of boys who refused to undergo compulsory military training was discussed, and it was decided that a representative deputation wait upon Mr. Massey, the Prime Minister, to insist that these indignities cease.

A suggestion came from the body of the room that delegates should march in a body to Parliament House to give emphasis, as it were, to the deputation. This was agreed to, and like the animals entering the mythical Ark, in two's, we commenced our parade from St. Peter's Schoolroom to Willis Street and Lambton Quay to Parliament House—three hundred and fifty delegates, and each with a red badge on his coat. It was an imposing procession, and as spontaneous as it was imposing.

The composition of the United Federation of Labour, as finally agreed to, differed but little from that of the Federation of Labour, except that provision was made for ten departments instead of eight, as provided for under the Federation rules. The departments agreed to were as follows:—

- Building Trades Department;
- Mining Department;
- Transportation Department;
- Printing Trades Department;
- Agricultural and Pastoral Department;
- Boot, Textile, and Clothing Trades Department;
- Wood and Metal Department;
- Shop, Office, and Warehouse Department;
- Food Workers' Department;
- Miscellaneous Trades and General Labourers' Departments.

The election of officers of the new Federation resulted as follows:—

President: W. T. Young.

Vice-President: J. Dowgray.

Organiser: R. Semple.

Secretary-Treasurer: P. H. Hickey.

For officers of the Social Democratic Party the following were elected:—

President: E. Tregear.

Vice-President: H. Hunter.

Organiser: W. T. Mills.

Secretary-Treasurer: P. Fraser.

One marked feature of Congress was the fact that only those delegates who took part in the first Conference in January were elected to official positions. It was also noted that on the Congress floor those organisations and delegates that had endorsed the Basis of Unity submitted to the January Conference voted solidly together to have the committees findings agreed to without amendment.

EXIT THE FEDERATION.

The Unity Congress having resulted in decisions acceptable to the Federation of Labour, there remained nothing else to be done but to recommend affiliated unions to make immediate application for membership in the reconstructed body. This was done, and the new Federation was launched with every one of the old Federation's affiliations becoming attached to it.

It was decided, however, that as the Federation of Labour had much valuable property registered in its name, that the registration of the organisation be retained for the time being.

The ownership of "The Maoriland Worker" building and plant had to be safeguarded in the interests of the unions that had subscribed the capital to establish the paper and to maintain it during the dark days of its existence. Although the Federation really went out of existence at the conclusion of the July Congress, it was found necessary to legally maintain it till as late as February 12, 1915, when the final meeting was held in Wellington.

This meeting was attended by Messrs. J. Dowgray (chairman), Semple, Coppersmith, O'Rourke, Fraser, Diamond, Howard, Alexander, Fagan, and Glover.

Of the seven delegates who took part in the establishment of the Federation in August, 1908, Mr. R. Semple was the only one who assisted in its obsequies, nearly seven years later.

The resolutions responsible for the final act are as follows:—Moved by Mr. Howard and seconded by Mr. Semple: "That we transfer all the property of the N.Z. Federation of Labour to 'The Maoriland Worker' Co., Ltd., which is to be registered immediately."

Moved by Mr. Alexander and seconded by Mr. Fagan: "That the Secretary be instructed to cancel registration of the N.Z. Federation of Labour as soon as the registration of 'The Maoriland Worker' Co., Ltd., is completed."

Thus ended the life of an organisation that in its day aroused the workers of New Zealand to a height of militancy that had never been reached before or since. Its ready response to appeals for help, financially or otherwise, its promptness in supporting any cause in keeping with working-class philosophy, no matter how unpopular the cause may

have been, won for itself a unique place in the workers' hearts. Those of us who were closely associated with it during its stormy career witnessed its passing with feelings of profound regret, that were to some extent lightened by the thought that in the United Federation of Labour the working-class possessed an instrument that could do more for them because of its wider appeal and influence, than did the battle-scarred Federation of Labour.

The Federation came into existence at a time when unionism was just beginning to awaken after twenty years of slumber. During its five years of active existence it succeeded in arousing the workers to a recognition of their duty to themselves and to each other; its monument is the enlightened men and women of the working-class who, becoming associated with the Labour Movement, have from that time onward never looked back, but have marched steadily forward.

Finis.

THE reprinting of *Red Fed Memoirs* highlights important issues for today's Labour movement.

It uncovers more than just Pat Hickey's account of the rise and demise of what became known as the Red Federation of Labour. It gives a feel for the tremendous political and industrial ferment following the turn of the century, the split between the arbitrationists and the federationists, and their eventful unity.

It raises the issue of industrial unionism. The Federation of Labour then was strongly syndicalist, and did not support any one political party. "There was none we could support," says Hickey. But, while there was the obvious failure of craft unionism, the concept of industrial unionism never really took hold and we are left today with a curious amalgam of the two.

The issue of shackling unions by legislation — the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act — remains of importance to all trade unionists today.

Very clearly the Federation's history demonstrates two lessons for today. Organised militant action by workers can render any legislation useless for a period of time. But militant action by sections of workers, principally coal and metal miners who formed the backbone of the Federation, can be defeated by the State in the long term. This shows the limits of militancy and syndicalism.

Red Fed Memoirs is still an inspiration for those interested in the origins of the New Zealand Labour movement and the contribution that people like Hickey have made to it.