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Fortnightly ONE PENNY

H.M. Customs and Excise. Waterguard Federation.

Conference, held at the Three Nuns Hotel, Aldgate, London, on the 3rd and 4th May, 1917.

Continued.

4th May.

Mr. Howell moved—"That the Joint Council is of opinion that the positions of Preventive Men at small ports (late Preventive Men-in-charge) properly belong to the Preventive Officer grade, and resolves to take action to secure—1. that these positions, as vacancies occur, shall be filled by Preventive Officers, and 2. that Acting Allowances shall be paid to the present holders of these positions." He said this resolution involved an important principle, and it had been fully discussed at the Association Conference, and he was instructed to bring it before the Joint Council. The matter affected the Preventive Officers almost as much as the Preventive Men, for it was in the best interests of the Preventive Officers that a clear line should be drawn between the duties of the two grades, and that Preventive Officers' duties (acting apart) should be performed by Preventive Officers only.

Although it was the quality and not the quantity of the work which should determine the grade to which it properly belonged, it could be proved conclusively that at some places a larger number of foreign arrivals were dealt with by Preventive Men than at other places where a Preventive Officer with a staff of Preventive Men were stationed. These men were, in the main, men who had failed to qualify for Preventive Officership, some of them under the old test, and yet the Board had placed them in positions where their responsibilities were in some respects actually superior to those borne by Preventive Officers at large ports. While the Council ought to insist that these positions should in future be filled by Preventive Officers, the interests of the present occupants ought to be protected.

These men had proved their capacity for performing the duties, and were entitled while they remained in the positions to be paid Acting Allowances, seeing that they were undoubtedly doing superior work, for which Preventive Men in the larger ports when Acting received 1s. a day. Mr. Hall seconded. After discussion of evidence, which proved the superior nature of the work performed, the resolution was adopted.

Mr. Cox proposed—"That the question of Salary and Overtime Rates be taken up immediately." He said he thought there was a strong feeling in the Service that main agitation should now be resumed. They now had an Arbitration Tribunal to appeal to, and they

should put their case for increased salary, etc., before it at once. Mr. Morgan seconded. Mr. Howell opposed, and moved as an amendment that the question be referred to the Executive Committee for action at the earliest possible moment. He said he was going to deal quite frankly with the question. They had decided in 1914, when war broke out, to cease main agitation. That decision, he thought, was a wise one, and nothing had occurred since to shake his opinion that it should be adhered to. With Mr. Hughes, he had attended the Government Trades Union Conference in November, 1915, and had supported the decision then taken against advocating increases in wages, as such, while the war continued. The Civil Service Federation was committed to the policy of war bonuses, and the Waterguard Associations adhered also to that policy. The Preventive Men had received a special allowance for increased responsibilities, the Preventive Officers also had an unanswerable case for similar treatment, and he thought it was inconsistent for them to embark upon a salary agitation at the present time. They ought, however, to leave the Executive free to decide when action should be taken. The present scales were suited to present conditions, but a reorganisation of the department might impose greater responsibilities upon the department, when the proposed scales would need to be increased. Mr. Hughes agreed with the previous speaker, and said all the great Trades Unions had abandoned a wage policy in favour of a bonus policy. The National Union of Railwaymen only recently had done so. The Labour Party was committed to a war bonus policy, and, he thought, while the war continued, would not look at any proposals to support main agitation. We ought to keep in line with the policy of the Trades Unions and the Labour Party. Mr. Hall said he had recently, perhaps more than any one present, urged an active policy with regard to salary scales, but after full consideration, and in the light of arguments advanced at that Conference, he decided that it would be better to defer action for the present. Various Cabinet and other Ministers had insisted that the cost of living would not go down after the war, and the Government dare not take away the war bonuses, which could then be included in the agitation for a reasonable salary scale.

Mr. Tizard objected that they had formulated salary scales under the impression that action would be taken immediately. If this was not done they would have been wasting their time.

Mr. Booth pointed out that having adopted the policy of the war bonus they could not consistently agitate for a salary scale now. When the war was over they would have a very strong case to act upon. Other speakers having addressed the meeting the amendment proposed by Mr. Howell was adopted by 15 votes to 3.

The discussion of the Special Allowance question was then resumed, and eventually it was decided to

take immediate steps to bring a claim before the Arbitration Tribunal in favour of the grant to the Preventive Officers of 7/6 a week on account of increased duties and responsibilities, and the extension of the allowance of 3/- a week to all Preventive Men irrespective of salary limits.

Mr. Booth referred to the work of the Journal, and appealed to the delegates to give every support to the Committee at Hull, who had kept the Journal a going concern under considerable difficulties. The management of the Journal was now in capable hands, and he had no doubt that the financial decline of the last year or so would be arrested this year, and an upward movement resumed. Mr. Hall proposed—"That this Council records its great appreciation of the work of the Waterguard officers at Hull in conducting the business of the "Customs Journal," which it realises is of immense importance to the work of the Federation." Mr. Sheehan seconded, and after Messrs. Sullivan and Howell, who both spoke with intimate knowledge of the Journal work, had paid warm tributes to the Journal Committee, the resolution was adopted with acclamation.

Mr. Cox proposed that Mr. Howell be re-appointed Secretary of the Joint Council, and Mr. Sheehan seconded. Mr. Sullivan referred to the Secretarial work during the past three years, and the appointment was confirmed. Mr. Howell replied.

Mr. Tizard proposed that Mr. Hall be elected President. Mr. Roberts seconded. This was carried, and Mr. Hall replied.

Mr. Howell said he wished to take that opportunity of recording his great indebtedness to Mr. Sullivan during his Secretaryship. He, the speaker, had assumed the office of Secretary to his Association and the Federation in 1914, when quite inexperienced, and he owed it to Mr. Sullivan's unflinching courtesy, his wide experience and counsel, that he had been able to cope with the work. Mr. Booth fully endorsed Mr. Howell's remarks, and spoke of the great assistance he had received in conducting the affairs of the Journal. Mr. Sullivan replied.

Mr. Howell proposed that Messrs. Cox and Hughes be re-appointed Joint Parliamentary Secretaries. Mr. Cash seconded, and the appointment was confirmed.

After various matters of detail had been disposed of votes of thanks were passed in favour of Messrs. Lake and Sephton, who had conducted the Conference Secretarial work, and Mr. Sullivan, who had so ably piloted the Conference.

These votes were passed with applause, and the Conference was closed by the delegates joining hands, and signing "Auld Lang Syne," Mr. Lake officiating at the piano.

Unity is Strength.

By "IDRIS."

Most of us, in the early days of our youth, at school were taught something of the philosophy of Æsop. We were told how the great Sage gave to each of his children a stick, with instructions to break it. This they did easily.

He took other sticks, tied them together into bundles, and gave the bundles to each of the children, with similar injunctions. This time they could not break the sticks. A moral of tremendous importance in the affairs of man was thus demonstrated by practical example. The story deeply impressed my infantile mind; a seed of knowledge took root and slowly but surely developed as the years passed, until I have become profoundly convinced of the importance of the principle of unity in human experience.

In recent years, in these later days of unimaginable horror, of unexampled strife, of raging conflict between bad principles and good ones, of war between freedom and the negation of freedom, what has been proved beyond all cavil, beyond all possibility of doubt? It is this, that unity—unity, coupled with justice and right—is the strongest, greatest power on earth. Where would the world have been to-day had it not been for the magnificent unity of aim and purpose on the part of the Allies? Would the sun of liberty and freedom have burst upon Russia had she not been plunged into the maelstrom of democratic aims and tendencies? Fighting side by side, with the leading democracies of four continents, for liberty, she has burst the bonds of slavery and has herself achieved freedom. Where would any one of the Allies have been to-day had it not been for this priceless bond?

Coming nearer home, where would labour have been had it not been for the Labour Party—the concrete expression of proletarian unity? Where would the nation have stood without the Workers' National Emergency Committee, a body whose principles of government, propounded over two years ago, are being applied to-day for the salvation of the country? What would be the position of the workers and Civil Servants had it not been for the splendid unity of the Trades Unions? Think; think deeply, and answer!

Yet the principles of unity passed down from ancient days, and the concentrated essence of latter day experience, fail to impress the minds of some of our friends. They remain imperious to, or only partially affected by, these influences. They cannot, or will not, realise the pregnant meaning of plain, historic, and living facts. Some of the leaders of our Associations seem to have a limited comprehension of the vital facts and true meaning of unity. Their ideas are narrow, their vision limited. They wander in a circle of cimmerian