

THE ABOLITION OF DESTITUTION AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

Summary of Speeches and Discussions.

THE Conference on the Abolition of Destitution and Unemployment, convened by the Independent Labour Party, was opened at the Memorial Hall, London, at 10-30 a.m. on Friday, October 7, 1910. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., presided, and was supported on the platform by Wm. C. Anderson (Chairman I.L.P.), George Lansbury, L.C.C., Miss Mary R. Macarthur, Ben Riley, and Francis Johnson (General Secretary I.L.P.).

The Secretary reported that 269 delegates had been appointed, representing 142 societies.

Four tellers were then appointed.

A letter was read from J. Keir Hardie, M.P., regretting his inability to be present owing to engagements in Scotland. Mr. Hardie wrote:—

“The Conference is one of great importance, and the subject to be dealt with touches the social condition of the people in its most vital part. This country is just now beginning to realise that prevention of Destitution will, in the end, prove cheaper than an attempt at curing an evil which is in itself incurable, unless prevented from coming into being. When as much energy is shown in the prevention of Destitution as is shown in the preparation for war, the condition of the people will be widely different to what it is to-day.”

J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., in his opening address, said the first proposition he wanted to lay down was that they must not expect the House of Commons to do their local administrative work. They must banish from their minds, as a preliminary of effective action, that a progressive majority in the House of Commons could protect any district from a reactionary administrative authority. Parliament could lay down a certain national minimum, but that minimum, from the very nature of the case to-day, must be an unsatisfactory one so far as a progressive local administrative authority was concerned, and every such authority must go considerably further than any national minimum that could be laid down by any central authority.