

and to be anxious to do nothing that would make negotiations more difficult.

Arthur Pugh, Chairman of Congress, began the speaking. He personally regarded the position as hopeful. There were important differences, he pointed out, between the situation now and that which the Congress of July, 1925, had to consider. Then the miners were faced with demands for wage reductions of 3s. to 15s. a week, together with longer hours and the abolition of the minimum wage. The miners refused to consider those terms, and were supported in their resistance by the Trade Union movement. Largely as a result of that action, the crisis was averted.

They had now a new factor in the report of the Coal Commission, which came definitely to the conclusion that the industry required to be thoroughly reorganised.

The Commission presented recommendations for reorganisation, and also recommended the discontinuance of the subsidy. It also recommended that the miners should agree to a temporary reduction of wages, but the condition was laid down that before any sacrifices were asked from those engaged in the industry, it should be definitely agreed that all practicable means for improving the organisation of the industry and increasing its efficiency were to be adopted as speedily as the circumstances allowed. Clearly the discussion of the problem should have been governed by that condition. Unfortunately, in the discussion that arose upon the Commission's report, the wage question was isolated and thrust into the foreground, while the more fundamental and far-reaching recommendations regarding reorganisation were obscured. The mineowners had sought to ignore the reconstruction proposals and to concentrate on the wages proposals.

The owners' wages proposals, said Pugh, were impossible, even as a basis of discussion, and the nation was on the verge of a crisis. "It may be," he concluded, "that the General Council will require to call upon all our affiliated bodies to take part in a struggle which will test the resources, the Trade Union loyalty,