

Northumberland Miners' Mutual Confident Association.

MONTHLY CIRCULAR,
NOVEMBER, 1928.

Death of Mr. TOM RICHARDSON,
Ex-M.P. for Whitehaven.



BORN JUNE 6th, 1868.

DIED OCTOBER 22nd, 1968.

CHARACTERISTICS.

Tom Richardson, whose name a few years ago was a household word among the trade unionists and politicians of the north of England, passed away from his strenuous earthly labours on the 22nd of last month. He and his family were residing in London, and during the last few months he suffered from a complete breakdown. Owing to the serious development of his trouble he was removed to St. Thomas' Hospital, London, where he died after being an inmate there for two or three weeks.

There was never a man who was more devoted to the cause of Labour than he was, and never a man threw himself body and soul, into the Labour Movement more completely than he did. On trade union questions and Labour politics he had a well-informed mind, and the ability to express himself fluently and clearly. As a miner and the son of a miner he knew working men and women, especially those of the mining community. Having lived and worked, rejoiced and suffered with them, he understood their characteristics, their aspirations, their needs and requirements. Thus no one could be better fitted to be a Labour leader than Tom Richardson. As a leader he had tact and ability, and great persuasive powers. His services were in constant demand and ungrudgingly given; even beyond his strength he laboured until strength completely failed him.

“ He sowed that brother men might reap,
And kept his honour undefiled ;
Undaunted still he passed to sleep,
And passing smiled.”

BIOGRAPHY.

Tom was born at Usworth, in the County of Durham, and was the eldest of a family of seven. His father was a miner, and was one of the forty victims who lost their lives in the terrible explosion at Usworth Colliery on March 2nd, 1885. Three weeks of weary waiting passed before his father's body was recovered. The only creature that was brought to the surface alive was a pony—and that several weeks after the explosion occurred.

He was working on the surface at the time of the explosion having had to change his work owing to ill health : otherwise he probably would have been in the mine when the explosion took place. He commenced to work in the mine when he was only 11 years of age, and not strong at that. Having had only a few years at school when he went into the pit, he then set himself the task of improving his education by devoted study. When little more than a lad he began to take an interest in trade union questions and social and religious work.

He removed to Northumberland shortly after his marriage, and worked at Holywell Colliery for some time. However, he went back to his native place and then to Washington, where he was appointed checkweigher on behalf of the workmen.

He became a local preacher in the Primitive Methodist Church, and was ever welcome to the pulpits of that body wherever he was "planned." Social work of all kinds engaged his earnest attention, and for 17 years he was a member of the Chester-le-Street Rural District Council, and for seven years was a member of the Durham County Council, and filled the position of Vice-Chairman of the Education Committee. He was for many years an active member of the Durham Miners' Association, and sat on the Executive Committee for a considerable time.

In 1910 he accepted an invitation from the Whitehaven Labour Party to stand as their Parliamentary candidate, and was returned at the head of the poll. He continued to hold the seat for eight years, when, largely owing to his views on the war; he was defeated. After a short while he went to Canada in connection with the Brotherhood Movement, but unfortunately even there he found the people in the grip of the war fever.

He came back again to this country about five years ago, and was engaged by the Labour Party on propaganda work, and more recently by the Co-operative Union in the London area. The stress and strain of this work proved too much for a constitution never too robust, with the result that he was overcome with illness and passed away as I have said.

THE FUNERAL.
MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD'S TRIBUTE.

The funeral took place at Golders Green Crematorium on Thursday, October 25th. The service was conducted by the Rev. Herbert Dunnico, M.P. for Consett an intimate friend of the family for more than twenty years. Representatives of the Labour Party present included Lord Arnold, Mr. H. B. Lees-Smith, M.P., Mr. J. J. Lawson, M.P. (representing the Durham Miners' Association), Mr. W. M. Adamson, M.P., Mr. S. P. Viant, M.P., Mr. W. T. Kelly, M.P., Mr. C. Duncan, M.P., Mr. R. C. Wallhead, M.P., Canon Moll, and Mr. W. Holmes, secretary of the agricultural workers.

An address was given by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald who said that Tom Richardson was a pioneer of the work in Durham, and no one had done more to give the county its present honoured position in the movement. His best memorial was in the hearts of his people. He did not merely come into the movement in its prosperous days ; he was one of those who made the movement. His overwhelming passion was loyalty to the cause. He never asked for any personal distinction, and never set himself up against others. "He was," said Mr. MacDonald, " one of the finest colleagues I ever had in the course of a long and eventful career."

He has left a widow, two daughters, and three sons to mourn his loss. Two sons and one daughter are in Canada.