

MINUTES OF BUSINESS OF FIRST MEETING.

Paper read at meeting for the formation of the Engineering Association of N.S.W., held 24th Sept., 1870:—

I think you will all agree with me that it would be a great advantage to us as a body, and, I believe, to many of us individually, if we could form a Society here similar to some of those at home and also in America, for the purpose of discussing Mechanical subjects, and by the friendly interchange of opinions, ideas and knowledge, assist each other not only in keeping up with the progress and advance of Mechanical skill in other parts of the world, but also in adopting it to the wants of the Colony, for I think it could scarcely be doubted that by keeping ourselves well informed of the constant progress made in all branches of our trade and endeavouring to adapt that knowledge to the various and increasing wants of the country we have adopted, we would thereby increase the value of our class to the society we live in, and also the wealth of the Colony, by adding to its products and enabling it to retain and expend within itself a portion of the money hitherto sent home and abroad for the machinery and appliances required for the various trades and manufactures carried on here, and thus finding employment both for ourselves and our children. I have no doubt that all of you since your arrival here have known people who send home for machinery merely because they thought that it could not be made in the Colony, or that they would get a better article, although they would willingly have paid a higher price if they were sure they could get as good an article in a shorter time. I think a Society of the kind proposed would, if well conducted, assist in removing many false impressions and opinions which float around us regarding what we can and can not do, and also quicken our own movements by enabling us to obtain

a better general knowledge of what is required by the new industries springing up around us in the shape of sugar mills, kerosene works, paper mills, tweed mills, meat preserving, etc., etc., and it is our duty to make ourselves acquainted with, and assist in preventing other colonies getting the lead and taking our trade from us, although we have all the materials for carrying on mechanical trades around us or under our feet in the shape of timber, coal, iron, copper, lead; in fact, all the materials required for the manufacturing country.

If such a Society had been in existence and in good working order while the present Intercolonial Exhibition was open, I feel confident that both ourselves and the Colony would have benefited more by it. Many of the exhibits would have furnished material for good papers, and I have no doubt that they would have been taken up and discussed systematically and with more good practical results than will arise from isolated individual effort.

Some of those I have conversed with on the subject, while admitting the great advantages it would confer, express doubt as to our ability to keep such a Society alive for any length of time, but I think many of the obstacles in our path would soon disappear if fairly met. The same was said of the Association of Foremen Engineers in London, when it was first started, and if you will allow me, I will read an extract from the "Artizan" of 1858 to show their position at starting, and one from the "Practical Mechanic" of this year to show their present position.

If they can achieve such results, why cannot we? Some of the engineers here came out to erect machinery for the quality and success of which their masters' credit was pledged. Some with steamers their masters had guaranteed, and masters are not in the habit of choosing their most useless men for

these purposes. The best of us who came out here principally to try and improve our condition in life, partly perhaps for love of change, proved by the very act that we had energy and self-reliance. We have now got colonised or climatized, if you choose to call it, and I believe if we determine to form and work such a Society, we can do it both with advantage to ourselves and others, for I have great faith in the words of the old song—"Where there's a will there's a way." I believe, as a rule, the mechanics here are very energetic, very intelligent, and possessed of more general information than the same class at home. Take the shops at home. As a rule they only carry the one branch of our trade. One is a marine engineers, another a locomotive engineers, another an agricultural engineers, or perhaps studies flax, cotton or woollen machinery from one year's end to the other; but here masters, draughtsmen, foremen, aye, and workmen too, have to open their eyes wider and look for a greater variety of work. The man who designs a marine engine may have to start a mud dredge, a locomotive or a horse mill. Two articles of the same class seldom follow each other, and the engineer or mechanic who is to carry out the work must have some knowledge of all. This acts on the mind like healthy exercises on the body, and gives the go-aheadiveness which good colonists generally possess. But still men are generally better informed in one branch of trade than they are on others, and always better able to form a correct opinion on any subject after they have heard others explain their views and taken part in a spirited discussion on its various merits and demerits.

One of the greatest difficulties to be encountered in forming and working a Society of this kind would, I believe, be the fear of the different shops that their work might be exposed to unfriendly criticisms, therefore in drawing up rules there are one or two

matters which would have to be kept in view, namely, all matters connected with trade or politics would have to be prohibited, and no mechanical work being done in any shop should be taken up as matters for discussion or criticism unless introduced by the master of the shop where it was being made or with the knowledge or consent of the master. With these exceptions, I think all mechanical subjects ought to be left open to the choice of the member who is to open the discussion, but it (the subject) should be named at the meeting previous to the discussion, to enable members to read up or otherwise prepare themselves to take part in the debate which should follow, and thereby assist to render it both pleasant and instructive.

I think it would also be an advantage to allow members to read from a mechanical work or journal any article or extract on any new subject which he thought would meet or assist in supplying a want in colonial manufactures. I think all members meeting for this purpose and carrying on with courtesy and kindness to each other would both increase their own knowledge and the kindly feeling and respect for each other which ought to exist between men whose pursuits and interests are identical, and which is often destroyed by misunderstanding when they never meet except when in direct competition with each other.

While holding these opinions firmly as I do, I would advise none to join who do not make up their minds to assist to the utmost of their power in carrying out the objects of the Association, for if we determine to succeed we will succeed, but if we get dispirited or careless at every little difficulty and cry out: "It won't work, it won't work," it would be like throwing a wet blanket on a fire and then crying out: "It won't burn, it won't burn." To

make a good fire requires good fuel, plenty of oxygen and a good draught; to carry on a Society as proposed, we have only to find the fuel in the shape of regular attendance, diversity of opinion, and a pull together will furnish the other two and prevent any stoppage for want of steam. I beg, therefore, to propose the following resolution.

(Signed) J. LAING.

After the reading of the above paper a resolution was passed and a committee was appointed to draw up rules, which were afterwards submitted to a subsequent meeting and the Engineering Association formed.

Minutes of a meeting held at the Mechanics' School of Arts, Pitt Street, on Saturday evening, September 24th, 1870, by a number of the leading members of the Engineering profession and Iron Trades of Sydney, for the purpose of forming an Association for the discussion of Mechanical subjects, etc.

Mr. William Smith being voted to the chair, opened the proceedings by reading the circular calling the meeting, and after some remarks relative to the origin of the movement, and explaining the want of such an Association, called upon Mr. Laing to propose the first resolution, namely:—

“That it is desirable to form an Association for the discussion of Mechanical subjects, watching the progress of Mechanical Arts in other countries, and keeping in view their adaptation to the wants of the colony.”

This resolution, proposed by Mr. Laing and seconded by Mr. Davidson, was (after various remarks by several gentlemen present) carried unanimously.

The chairman then invited the gentlemen present to come forward and sign a paper pledging themselves to become members of such an Association, and to do all in their power to carry it out successfully.

The following gentlemen signed the roll:— Messrs. Smith 1, J. Laing 2, McGregor 3, G. Davidson 4, N. Selfe 5, P. Hunter 6, W. Davidson 7, I. Cromack 8, J. Fyfe, junr., 9, A. Halkett 10, G. Croll 11, P. McQueen 12, F. Davy 13, W. Lacy 14, H. Vale 15, J. I. Mayer 16, T. Brodie 17, J. Cahill 18, G. A. Morell 19, J. P. Franki 20, W. Grant 21, T. Ferguson 22, W. Scott 23, R. Mitchell 24, J. Fyfe, senr., 25.

Mr. G. A. Morell then proposed the next resolution, viz.:—

“That a committee of six (6) members be now appointed to prepare a draft of provisional rules to lay before the next meeting, and any other business which they think would assist in carrying out the objects of the Association.”

This resolution was carried unanimously, and the following members chosen to form a committee:— Messrs. Smith, W. Davidson, G. Davidson, G. A. Morell, J. Fyfe, F. Davy, J. Laing.

The meeting then adjourned until Wednesday evening, 12th October, at half-past seven.

Minutes of adjourned meeting held on Wednesday evening, 12th October, 1870:—

The Secretary pro. tem. read the minutes of the previous meeting, which were confirmed.

Chair taken at eight o'clock by Mr. Smith, who stated to the meeting that the committee appointed at the last meeting to draw up Rules, etc., had held four (4) meetings, and were unable to complete the draft of Rules to their own satisfaction; they could therefore only lay a portion of the Rules necessary before the meeting, and at the same time ask for an

extension of time to amend what had been drawn up and make such additions as might be considered necessary. He then called on Mr. Laing to read the Rules, which he did, and after considerable discussion as to the name to be given to the Association it was proposed by the committee to call it the Mechanical Engineering Association of New South Wales.

After several amendments had been proposed and withdrawn, it was proposed and carried that the society be called The Engineering Association of New South Wales, after which it was proposed and carried: "That the committee be allowed further time for the consideration of the Rules."

It was also proposed that Mr. Broderick, Mr. Downing, and Mr. Cruickshank be added to the number of the committee.—Carried.

The meeting then adjourned until Wednesday, 26th October, at half-past seven.

Minutes of adjourned meeting, held at the School of Arts, Pitt Street, 26th October, 1870:—

The chair was taken by Mr. W. Smith at eight o'clock.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The chairman called on Mr. Laing to read the Rules, which had been printed and distributed amongst the members.

Mr. Halkett proposed: "That the Rules as read be passed, leaving any amendments or alterations to be made at some future time if such be required to suit the working of the society."

Mr. W. Davidson proposed an amendment to the effect that the entrance fee proposed be reduced from £1 to 10/-. This amendment was carried, and the Rules as amended were then passed.

Mr. W. Davidson then proposed: "That the office of President be left open for the present."

Seconded by Mr. G. Davidson, and carried.

Proposed that Mr. Rose, Mr. Watt, Mr. Evans, Mr. McDougall and Mr. J. Mather be members of the Association.—Carried.

The meeting then proceeded to elect officers and committee.

For the office of Vice-President, Mr. Laing, Mr. Rose, and Mr. Poolman were severally proposed and seconded. Mr. Laing withdrew, and after balloting Mr. Rose was elected by a majority of 12 to 5.

Mr. Downing was then proposed and seconded for the office of Secretary and elected unanimously.

For the office of Treasurer, Mr. Halliday was proposed, seconded, and unanimously elected.

The following gentlemen were then proposed as Committee:—Messrs. Selfe, Poolman, Smith, Halkett, Laing, Broderick, Manning, Scott, G. Davidson, W. Davidson, A. Parkinson, and the following elected by ballot:

Mr. William Smith.

Mr. George Davidson.

Mr. William Scott.

Mr. Henry Broderick.

Mr. Norman Selfe.

Several members then came forward and paid their subscriptions, and the meeting adjourned until the third Wednesday in November owing to the regular meeting night falling on the Prince of Wales' Birthday.

(Signed) FRANCIS T. ROSE,
Chairman.