

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

MR. J. BOWMAN (Vice-President): Comrades, no words of mine are necessary to emphasise the importance of this, the First Conference of the National Union of Mineworkers. We meet for the first time as a great united body and I have great pleasure in asking our President to deliver his Annual Address to the Conference.

MR. WILL LAWTHOR (President) was received with loud applause:

Fellow Members, two years have passed since we met in Annual Conference. During these years events of great significance have taken place. The war in Europe has come to an end with the defeat of the power of Nazi Germany; we have taken the first steps in building one Miners' Union; and we meet on the eve of a General Election, the results of which will have a profound effect not only on the future of the mineworkers, but also on the conditions of life of the mass of the people in this country.

In those two years great changes have taken place which will affect our membership and the future of this industry. You had decided last year that the old form of organisation of separate districts should go, and that we should step ahead to build one miners' organisation, catering for all those who work in and about the mines of this country. When last we met it was my privilege to preside over the Annual Conference of the M.F.G.B. Today I am proud to have the honour to preside at this, the first Annual Conference of the National Union of Mineworkers.

If you will allow me one personal note it is to say that I thank you for the splendid vote you gave me when electing me to this high office. I count it the greatest tribute to enjoy that confidence; it means more to me than any emblem or insignia that the eye could behold.

The National Union must equip itself to deal with the many problems which will require to be faced in the coming years; it inherits from the Mineworkers' Federation a grand record of achievement on behalf of the members, a record which is unsurpassed by any other industrial organisation; it is for us to ensure that the spirit of the members as recorded by the ballot vote in October last, proving as it did, their overwhelming desire for a national organisation, is fully infused into our work. No great changes can be made without affecting the old order; problems, some difficult of solution, will have to be met, but, as our predecessors triumphed when they were building the Federation, so I am sure we can succeed in our new tasks.

Today for the first time in six years we meet with the evil forces of Fascism and Nazism in Europe overthrown, and the idols in Italy and Germany in ashes.

A vital part in this victory has been played by the miners. Despite the strain and difficulties of the war years, despite the shortage of manpower, the poor quality of timber and belting and other materials, the shortage of food, they have cut and raised the coal to enable the war effort to go forward. Especially would I pay tribute to our older members who have carried such a heavy burden during the war; over 100,000 of them over 55 years of age. Large numbers of workmen over the age of 65, and in some cases, 70 years of age, are still working at the coal face. These truly are the heroes of labour, without

whose endurance the war could not have been won. Let the Press do a little less shouting about absenteeism and give a little more recognition to the work of these men at an age when many company directors seek a rest from their far less arduous toil.

In those far-off days before September, 1939, we urged and warned the Government of the day that the gangsters who had destroyed liberty and democracy abroad would do it here if a halt was not called and a stand made against them. Often it seemed as if our appeal had fallen on deaf ears. There are many today who rejoice, but who hesitated and doubted and alas, would fain have gone with the dictators, if they could have had guarantees that it was only the democratic forces that were to be destroyed.

Mankind has paid a terrible price for the appeasers of Hitler and the crowd of worshippers at the Nuremburg Carnivals. No wonder that many of these appeasers want to forget how they heiled to Hitler and his murderers. We cannot forget nor will we allow those who attended the Nazi rallies to forget that the inauguration of the agonies of the common folk began in Spain. The aid that was given to Franco has been returned a thousandfold in blood, sweat, tears and broken hearts.

Let those wicked sycophants, those supporters of the evil spirit of Nazism, realise that they paved the way for Hitler. We shall not accept their alibis; mankind can have no use for those who bowed the knee and fawned on the forces of evil.

To all those men and women of the free world, whether in the air, on land, or on the sea, who gave their lives for freedom, we pay our tribute. There scarcely exists a home from the Russian steppes across Europe, over the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific, including South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, from which loved ones have not gone, never more to return. Words cannot express those losses, it is the duty of those of us who are given the right to live by their sacrifices to resolve that they have not died in vain.

We stand in their honour, and solemnly resolve not to allow a moment to be wasted in our endeavour to give to those they loved the right to a new way of life, freed from the cares and anxieties that were their lot in the past. I ask you to stand. (*The delegates rose.*) I would include also the late John McGurk of Lancashire; William Todd, of Durham; Edward Dunn, M.P., of Yorkshire; William Jenkins, M.P., of South Wales; John Blakemore of the Midlands; and John Carr of Northumberland; all of whom served at some period on the National Executive. I extend to their relatives, and to the relatives of all of our members who have died, our very deepest sympathy. . . . Thank you.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION

Using all the ingenuity in their power, the economically powerful interests employed by the coalowners to keep compensation costs down as much as possible, continue to add to the distress of injured workers by attacking weekly rates often on the slightest pretexts. Our list of casualties increases, and with it our disgust and bitterness. Let those who think that in some mysterious way the owners really are inclined to a more enlightened view concerning the problems arising in our industry, consult our Compensation Secretaries. In

every part of the coalfield their reports reveal that the disgraceful and niggardly behaviour of the employers' representatives continues, that the injustice to the workers of which we have so often and for so long complained continued, and that great widespread and needless anxiety is caused to injured men and their dependants. We, in this industry, are in daily contact with this terrible problem. We can never forgive the owners for their brutal and cynical aggravation of the sufferings of our people by the ruthless way in which compensation rates are attacked. At last opinion in this country has clearly condemned the discreditable features with which we are all so familiar, but that does not mean that there has been any encouraging pronouncement from the employers or their representatives. In this, as in so many other matters, they will advance only when they are compelled to do so. Some people (not so well acquainted with them as I have been obliged to be) have told me that they have heard many coal owners who have been quite enlightened in their observations concerning the White Paper on Workmen's Compensation. No wonder! I have had the opportunity of discussing this matter in great detail with my colleagues who are in daily contact with the current cases and who have made a lengthy report which has been considered by the National Executive Committee. I have also been present at meetings with my colleagues at the T.U.C., and elsewhere. There is one point which appears quite clearly from the White Paper and that is that from the standpoint of the coalowners it is too good to be true. It would be no exaggeration to say that they will save enormous sums of money (compared with the present cost of workmen's compensation) and will at the same time be relieved of the legal liability which now rests upon them. There are many vitally important advances and reforms set out in the White Paper. It can, undoubtedly, be made the foundation of a great advance—the greatest advance of our generation. It must succeed. It must command the respect and confidence of the workers. I say without the slightest hesitation that it will not command that respect and confidence if the present entirely inadequate weekly rates are made the basis of the new scheme. We have made constructive proposals upon this important question and these are set out in the Report which is printed in the Appendix to the Executive's Report. Make no mistake about this. We, and by "We" I mean the Labour Movement, are ready—we are more than ready to deal with the great issues of Social Insurance. I go further. I say that we are the only political force in this country who are capable of dealing with this question. If we are to have justice in the administration of Workmen's Compensation; if we are to have reasonable, adequate weekly rates established for the benefit of injured workers and their dependants, if we are to escape from the humiliating provisions of the present Acts—these benefits will come only when we have a Labour Government in full power and authority. The well-considered proposals which we have discussed and adopted are ready, and could be enshrined in the records of our generation as part of one of the greatest of its Acts of Parliament. It will be the privilege of the Labour Party to put this into effect. Our political opponents have not the will, and certainly not the experience. Years and years of oppressive niggardly behaviour attacking the small weekly rates of injured workers have not given them the attitude of mind necessary to carry this great responsibility.

The whole basis of the present system of Workmen's Compensation will be

fundamentally changed for the better when the provisions of the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Bill are brought into effect. The rates proposed are higher than those set out in the White Paper. I must make it quite clear that whilst I fully appreciate that in some cases men who are seriously disabled will receive higher rates than they would have under the present system, there are others whose rates will be less. In a great finely conceived imaginative measure such as the new Bill is in so many of its features, it is, to my mind, quite wrong that this defect should not have been eliminated. We are making in this Bill great headway towards better conditions for the injured worker. What an opportunity! We can make the lot of the injured worker so much better under the new provisions that it would be a tragedy if full advantage is not taken of the chance to provide generous rates. The proposals of our Movement are clear and specific. On this question of the amount of the weekly rate, we consider that if our proposals are included in the Act the break-away from the old discredited, sordid system will be complete, and the new system will be firmly established on a just basis.

I cannot leave this subject of Workmen's Compensation without referring to the pneumoconiosis cases, particularly those in the South Wales coalfield. For many years we have argued that men who are disabled by lung disease caused by dust should be entitled to compensation. Until the Pneumoconiosis schemes came into operation, only the silicosis cases could be dealt with and many thousands of cases must have been crippled by lung disease caused by dust, but could not prove that they were cases of silicosis. At last the pneumoconiosis schemes came into effect. Now a new problem has arisen, and in a most acute form. Over two thousand cases are awaiting certification in the coalfield in South Wales. The magnitude of this problem and its pressing urgency are matters of grave concern to the National Executive Committee and the most serious representations have been made to the Ministry. Every possible effort will be made to find a solution to this terrible problem.

GENERAL ELECTION

The Tories, obviously desiring to take the fullest advantage of the war record of the Prime Minister, and hoping that the people's feeling of relief at the end of the European war will serve to obscure the real issues with which we are faced, have decided that the country must be forced into an early General Election. In doing so, they prevent the mass of soldiers, sailors, and airmen from fully participating in the Election, and the hastily compiled register on which the election is fought disfranchised thousands of people, who because of war circumstances were forced to leave their homes.

The present administration is a Tory Government, and any attempt to try to persuade the people otherwise is throwing dust in their eyes. The inclusion of a few Liberals, disowned by their own Party, and so-called non-party men, cannot in any way affect the policy of an administration in which the Tory Party is predominant.

The contesting parties should be judged on their policies and not on the basis of individuals. To cast a vote for the Tories, merely because of the war record of the Prime Minister, would be to disregard the fact that no one man could have established such a record without the assistance of both capable

and loyal colleagues, and in this connection I would remind you that some of the most difficult posts in the Coalition Government were filled by leaders of the Labour Movement. (*Applause.*)

This war has been won by the self-sacrifice and labour of millions of the rank and file in the Armed Forces, in the factories and in the mines. It has not even been the victory of one country alone; the people of the Resistance Movements, the unforgettable heroism of the Red Army with its 15 million casualties, all have played their part. It has been a victory won not by the privileged few, but by the free working people of the world who hate Fascism. It is certainly no argument for a new dose of Tory anti-working class rule. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Churchill's new Government must be assessed both by the record of the men who compose it and by its election programme. Not all of them are Churchills; among the leading members are those who, like Butler, were the foremost champions of appeasement against Churchill's attacks in the dark days of 1938-39; big monopoly builders like Lyttelton, Duncan and Beaverbrook; great landlords like Rosebery and Petherick. What a crew; and what a programme. (*Applause.*) Its one great plank is—Freedom for private enterprise. If the Tories are returned to power, we shall drift back to the economics of the jungle—a free for all—with consequent wage cuts, unemployment, rising prices and derelict areas. Industry will be left to the mercy of the big monopolies. Such a policy will lead inevitably to restriction of output and not an expansion of production which is so essential to a rising standard of life for the people.

How can we trust such a Government to build that lasting friendship, economic co-operation and unity with the U.S.A. and, above all, with the U.S.S.R. on which prosperity and lasting peace depend? The forces that brought Fascism to the height of its power are already at work again—we see their hand in the coddling of war criminals; in the breach of the undertakings given in our name to Greek democracy; in the renewed spate of anti-Soviet lies and slanders and the gospel of "talking rough to the Russians." The people are not prepared to go through these bitter years again; they must end the Tory power.

For us as mineworkers, however, the acid test is the Government's policy for dealing with the coalmining industry.

SITUATION IN THE COALMINING INDUSTRY

Before dealing with our proposals I think it would be as well if I referred to the present situation in the industry.

A most serious situation confronts the industry and consequently this country. The output of saleable coal had fallen in 1944 to 184,000,000 tons, a reduction of over 42 million tons per annum as compared with 1938. Never before in this century (apart from the two years, 1921 and 1926 when there were prolonged stoppages in the industry) has the production of coal in this country fallen to such a low level.

What are the consequences of this fall in output? Already it has been necessary to restrict coal consumption to 34 cwts. in the south of England

and 54 cwts. in the north up to April next year. The Central Electricity Board has warned the Government that it may have to cut power supplies for long periods in the coming winter. Especially serious is the fact that we are unable to allocate coal for export to Europe where, in the midst of terrible hardships and shortages, there are factories, railways, and therefore workers idle for lack of coal. If this coal shortage goes on it will mean that the whole world shortage of food and clothing and especially the shortage in our own country is prolonged for years. And it will mean, too, that we lose for good some of Britain's most important markets. It would make England the distressed area of the world.

Those people who simply point to Government control as being responsible for the ills of the industry do a grave disservice to the industry and the country; anyone who has any knowledge of the industry must know that the problems with which we are faced today were present long before Government Control was established in 1942. Government Control was in fact applied with a view to arresting the decline in the output of coal and we are satisfied that, as unsatisfactory as the Control is in its present form, the position would have been very much worse had the Coalition Government not taken the decision it did in 1942.

The difficulties arising from the unsatisfactory trend in the industry during the period between the two wars have been intensified by the war itself.

As I have already pointed out, production is at a most dangerous level. The causes are to be found in the past and the colliery owners and their friends of the Conservative Party must accept full responsibility—for it is they who have carried on this, Britain's basic industry, in such a way as to lead to its destruction.

During the past 30 years the mineworkers have consistently pressed for reorganisation of this industry. The failures in the management of this industry were pointed out by the Sankey Commission in 1919, by the Samuel Commission in 1926, by the Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission established under the 1930 Coal Mines Act, and now, in 1945, after all these years, all that we have said has been reinforced in that remarkable document the Reid Report. Our pleadings for an organised industry, however, have fallen on deaf ears and during all these years Britain's most valuable raw material has been wasted.

I have said that the root of the problem is to be found in the lack of a national plan, and that the evils which beset the industry go back a long way. Up to 1913 the industry enjoyed a period of almost continuous expansion. But by the end of the century certain tendencies were beginning to develop which the coalowners did nothing to correct. The easily accessible coal was becoming exhausted. Those in control did little to counteract the process by improving the technical organisation of the industry.

What happened between the two wars? Was any serious attempt made to solve the industry's real difficulties? The answer is plain and clear. Instead of embarking on a policy of reorganisation, reconstruction and serious technical improvement, the colliery owners resorted to the usual practice of reducing the costs by cutting wages. On the Continent of Europe, however, a policy of

reorganisation, planning and re-equipment was carried out. The result was plain for all to see. Productivity was raised until the output per worker rose far higher than it did in this country.

The inefficiency of the British coal industry is most clearly revealed in the output per man-shift.

In Britain in 1938 it was 1·14 tons, compared with 1·54 tons in the Ruhr, 1·86 in the Netherlands, and 1·82 tons in Poland.

A consequence of the poor layout of British pits is also indicated by the fact that in the U.S.A. there is only one haulage worker for every 50 tons of coal produced; in Holland one haulage worker for every 20-25 tons of coal produced; and in Britain one haulage worker for every 5 tons of coal produced. In these few simple figures are displayed the criminal inefficiency of the British coal industry as it is organised today.

The Reid Committee draw attention to this fact and point out that up to 1914 the industry had been carried on without any serious changes in the practices long established in the various coalfields. This general attitude was continued between the two wars and even when machinery was introduced the improvements that might have been expected were rendered largely ineffective because mechanisation was started at the wrong end. It was, as the Reid Committee pointed out, like putting "new wine into old bottles."

What was required was large scale planning on a coalfield basis, the development of new methods of transport underground, the sinking of new shafts, a complete replanning of the layout on the surface, so that full advantage could be taken of the increased output that mechanisation at the face could give. But this the colliery owners did not do, and the reason is obvious. Private ownership stood in the way. How could the industry, governed as it is by private interests, and a selfish regard for profit rather than national service, engage in a complete replanning and reorganisation of the industry? The separate leaseholds, the financial interests of warring groups, is a barrier to progress in this industry.

What needs to be done? The whole industry needs to be reorganised on the basis of a national plan.

MANPOWER

One of the greatest problems of the industry is manpower. So acute had this problem become during the war, the Government was forced to direct men and boys to the mines. In 1944, the coal industry employed 710,000. But if the abnormal measures had not been taken—and these measures cannot be repeated—and if account is taken of the wastage through old age, serious and fatal accidents, disease and death, the labour force in this country would have been reduced to 665,000.

Moreover, of the 710,000 employed in 1944, over 100,000 were 55 years of age and over. The unpalatable fact which has to be faced is that youths are no longer attracted to the industry. For many years the industry has failed to attract sufficient juvenile entrants to replace the very heavy annual wastage; some idea of this problem can be gained from the figures for the years 1943 and 1944. In those two years more than 82,000 workmen were lost to the

industry through death, accident and other causes; as against this annual wastage, only 22,000 juveniles were recruited to the industry, so that the net annual wastage in those two years was something like 60,000. You will all be aware of the causes for this failure to recruit juvenile labour to the industry, but the country generally must also realise why this difficulty exists.

The Forster Committee, which undertook an impartial investigation of the problem on behalf of the Government in 1942, after a careful sifting of the evidence presented to them, came to the conclusion that the reluctance of boys to enter the coal industry is not due to a single cause "but to a variety of factors which may operate with ranging degrees of strength in different districts."

The report, in dealing with the first of the adverse factors, said: "The industry has a black record as regard unemployment and especially since the end of the last war there have been certain districts in which the incidence of unemployment and part-time working has been particularly severe. During that period coalmining has been subject to a series of shocks which have done serious damage to the prospects of those whose well-being has been dependent upon the industry. The memory of these shocks still remains and has operated as a deterrent to recruitment.

"The high accident rate in the industry is a considerable factor which has led parents and school teachers to discourage lads from entering the industry."

It is clear, therefore, that no plan for revitalising the coal industry is of any value if it does not take into account the embittered relations which exist between the miners and the mineowners, the economic consequences of which are so clearly revealed in Sir John Forster's Report. We are convinced that, apart from the economic reasons which call for public ownership and control of the coal industry, account must be taken of the deep-rooted conviction among mining folk, a conviction based on long years of experience, that so long as the present owners remain in control they cannot be certain of a regular job, decent wages and hours, and proper social amenities.

One of the first tasks of any new Government will be to solve the many pressing problems which face this country's major industry—coal mining—and already we have received ample evidence of the intentions of the Tories. The new Churchill Government has decided ". . . that the working, treatment, and disposal of coal should continue to be conducted by private enterprise." It is, I think, particularly interesting to note the close resemblance of the Government's proposals to those which were recently put forward by Mr. Robert Foot, Chairman of the Mining Association of Great Britain.

The Government, like Mr. Foot, intends to leave the industry in the hands of the present colliery owners who have allowed it to deteriorate to its present position.

Both Mr. Foot and the Government propose to reorganise the industry by voluntary means and only if this failed would they resort to compulsory powers.

Mr. Foot himself has warned the owners that they can only be trusted with the control of the coalmining industry provided they are prepared to accept the drastic kind of reorganisation which the seriousness of the present situation makes imperative. This is merely window-dressing, for his proposals will not

meet the situation. The mineworkers do not believe that the owners have changed or are likely to change as a result of the advice given them by their new Chairman; neither have we any faith in a Tory Government. We do not believe that either the owners or the Government of the owners' party is capable of taking the drastic steps necessary for the organisation of the industry.

As recently as May 29th, 1945, the Minister of Fuel and Power, when placing the policy of the present Government in relation to coal mining before the House of Commons, referred, among a number of other things, to the ". . . importance of providing man-riding facilities by which there would be a great saving of time and a consequent improvement in productivity." The same question had been the subject of a recommendation of the Royal Commission which examined the problems of the industry as long ago as 1925, when they arrived at the conclusion that sufficient importance was not being paid to this matter and urged that excessive underground travelling on foot should be eliminated by the provision of facilities for riding men in or by sinking additional shafts. In spite of that recommendation, however, it is still necessary for the Minister of Fuel and Power to remind the owners of the advantages which would accrue from such an innovation; can anyone wonder why we doubt the wisdom of the Government's decision to give the colliery owners still another chance?

As in the past any attempt to introduce some order into the industry has been met by the vigorous and successful opposition of the colliery owners.

No wonder the Government's decision has been welcomed by Mr. Foot; this to my mind is a fair indication of what can be expected from this alleged plan.

Need I remind you that in 1930 the Labour Government introduced a Bill which was designed to deal with the chaos which existed in the industry. Part II provided for the establishment of a coal mines reorganisation commission, a body which was to "further the reorganisation of the coal industry," and to prepare schemes for the amalgamation of coal mines in the national interest. You will all recall that owing to the continuous and persistent obstructive attitude of the coalowners, progress was slow, and that in 1935, after nearly five years of fruitless effort, the Commission declared they "are practically at a standstill."

The Government asked the Commissioners to refrain from any further efforts at amalgamation until the position was considered and in May, 1936, a Coal Mines Bill was introduced, which was designed to make the powers of the Commission effective. Pressure from the coalowners, however, was so strong that the Bill as amended in Parliament became practically worthless, with the result that the Bill was withdrawn.

Still another Bill was introduced in November, 1937, but again after a stormy passage through Parliament the clauses relating to compulsory amalgamation were so revised as to render them quite ineffective.

You will all remember the big advertisements that appeared early in 1938 in the national Press by the Mining Association of Great Britain, and the letter which was sent to colliery shareholders by the then President of the Mining

Association, Sir Evan Williams, urging that the fight should be carried on in support of private enterprise—1945 version is “free enterprise”—pointing out that “Bureaucratic control over business is steadily growing” and urged opposition to compulsory amalgamations by writing to their Member of Parliament, to their local political organisation and to a national or a local newspaper.

How familiar this all sounds today!

Even *The Times* was moved, in a leading article, to refer to the “strident tones of the Mining Association,” and described it as “the mouthpiece of a prejudice that is not only narrow but is in fact a danger to private enterprise.”

And again it will be within your memory how when the Bill was sent to the Lords the hordes of noble royalty-owning backwoodsmen emerged from their obscurity to vote against the Bill. As one financial newspaper at the time sadly complained, “To the observer it would seem that the future well-being of the coal industry, ostensibly the Bill’s chief objective, has long since been forgotten.”

Certainly, under the 1938 Act, no compulsory amalgamations were enforced up to the outbreak of war, when the activities of the Coal Commission were suspended entirely.

The coalowners consistently opposed reorganisation, prevented amalgamation of colliery enterprises in accordance with a national plan, concentrated on profit-making, and thus dissipated a valuable asset by continuing to mine coal in the old uneconomic and wasteful fashion. Amalgamations, it is true, did go on, but in the main on an over-capitalised and technically inefficient basis.

As a result of the mismanagement of the industry by the present representatives of private enterprise, it was ill-equipped to meet the demands made upon it by the war. The Tory Governments which held office before the war, along with the colliery owners, cannot escape the responsibility for this situation.

To leave the industry in the hands of private enterprise and to appoint a central authority to provide “such help and guidance as are useful,” as is now proposed by the present Government, is no solution to the problem. The only remedy lies in the national ownership of the industry. (*Hear, hear.*)

One other feature must, I think, be mentioned in relation to the forthcoming General Election. It is unnecessary to remind you that most of the improvements made in the conditions of our members during the war were made with the assistance of the Coalition Government *and in spite of the opposition of the colliery owners*. To return to power a Government which would be predominantly Tory, means that the negotiations which must of necessity take place in regard to the National Wages Agreement which is due to expire in 1948 will be carried on under similar conditions to those with which we were faced in 1925 and 1926.

The present National Agreement, proposals for which originated from the Coalition Government, was signed by the owners’ representatives under protest. The colliery owners are still opposed to any form of National Agreement and we are satisfied that with a Tory Government in power they will be

found to be even less accommodating than they were under the Coalition Government.

To return a Tory Government will be the first step towards lowering the standard of the mining community.

I would urge with all my power the absolute necessity of working for the return of a Labour Government. (*Applause.*)

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

How is the industry to be brought to a condition of efficiency? The technical changes necessary are outlined in great detail in the Reid Report.

The coal resources of the country must be worked in accordance with a national plan and the reserves intelligently conserved. If the coal is to be worked efficiently a number of new sinkings will have to be undertaken and some shafts will have to be sunk to lower depths.

In some cases, pits that are on the point of exhaustion have reserves that could be more adequately worked from adjoining pits.

The underground system of haulage will have to be reorganised in most pits. Man-riding facilities will have to be extended if we are to avoid the wasteful procedure in which men spend as little as five hours at the working face.

All this will necessitate an all-round improvement in shaft-winding, a complete re-organisation of the layout at the surface at most pits and improvements in the size of wagons, layout of sidings and, what is very important, the wide extension of the use of machinery for cleaning, grading and the processing of coal.

We as miners are prepared to render every assistance in supporting measures for the radical technical improvement of our industry, but we recognise that all this can only be achieved if the industry is organised on a national basis. Moreover, we know that it can only be done if the artificial barriers that have been created by private enterprise are removed, so that the industry can be organised effectively in the interests of the nation and also to provide that such a technical reorganisation will not be used to cut wages and generally reduce the standards of those engaged in the industry which unfortunately was the method in the past.

CAPITAL FOR REORGANISATION

I next turn to the important question of the capital required to re-equip and reorganise the industry on the scale required. It is obvious that a large expenditure of capital will be needed. There have been a number of estimates of the cost of reconstruction of the coal industry; these vary between £150,000,000 and £300,000,000. The Reid Committee did not feel able to give an estimate; all that they would say was that "the total cost will necessarily be very heavy." In the Report details are given of a number of major projects for the reconstruction of certain collieries, and these vary between 4s. 3d. and 21s. 6d. per ton in the estimated cost per ton of output after reconstruction. Other large sums are involved; in one instance the cost was estimated at £434,000, in another £550,000, and in a third, £656,000, and it should be

noted that most of the schemes are restricted to limited improvements. It is certain that if full reorganisation of these pits were carried out on the scale outlined in the report, the expenditure would be far higher.

I am convinced that the sum needed for replanning the industry will not be less than £250,000,000, and it might even be more if in addition to reorganisation of existing pits a bold programme of new sinkings was carried into effect.

The owners say they can find the capital required. It is probable that certain of the large combines in the industry might be able to raise quite large sums for the purpose of carrying out a limited reconstruction of individual pits. I think this is quite possible; *but this is not enough*. The real problem will remain untouched if such a limited and piecemeal reorganisation is carried out. The industry needs to be reorganised in accordance with a national plan and I am convinced that private enterprise cannot do this. Only the State would be able to raise the large sums required at a low rate of interest and it is only right, therefore, that the Government, as representing the interests of the nation as a whole, should accept its full responsibility for the complete organisation of this great industry.

What needs to be done for those employed in the industry? If the industry is to retain the men now employed and if new recruits are to be attracted to coal mining, then there must be a vast improvement in housing conditions in many coal areas; we want new townships built where the miners can enjoy improved social amenities; we want a big extension in training and education; adequate research into the treatment and prevention of disease; proper rates for those who are injured and disabled; and the pits must be made safer and better places to work in. All these things can be done.

THE WORKERS IN A NATIONALISED INDUSTRY

In a reconstructed mining industry the workers will find new opportunities for developing and using their native skill and pride of craft. We shall see to it that right through the administration of a nationalised system their advice and active help is sought, from the national level to the pit and group of pits.

If our great industry is to be revolutionised and reborn, it will impose tremendous responsibilities on each and all of us. It is our effort, our co-operation that must win nationalisation and overcome the difficulties of putting it into effect. The problems that result from hundreds of years of mismanagement will not melt like magic at the word "nationalisation." But once the word is spoken, once the legislation is passed, then we shall have the chance to tackle the job we have longed for—to give this nation a mining industry of which it can be proud, an industry producing plentiful supplies of coal at reasonable prices and under conditions that provide a healthy and happy life for those who have to work in it worthy of their arduous calling.

Let there go out from this Conference today a clarion call to all miners and their families, and to the workers in all trades and occupations to work as never before for the defeat of Toryism and the return of a Labour Government. (*Loud and prolonged applause.*)