

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

CHAIRMAN: Now, at this stage it would be normal for me to expect the Vice-President to rise and invite the President to make his Annual Address. Unfortunately, Sam is not with us this morning owing to illness, and I am sure it will be the wish of Conference that we send to him a message of sympathy and wish him well. (*Hear, hear*). Thank you very much.

Now I am going to invite myself to proceed, as usual, with the Presidential Address. The Mayor is going to stay with us for the time being, but he has got to get away so he will have to move off while I am speaking. He will be moving out at about five-to-eleven for an eleven o'clock meeting.

This is the ninth occasion on which I have been privileged to address you in Annual Conference since I was elected as your President in 1960.

The story of the coalmining industry over the last decade is indeed a grim one. In spite of outstanding progress in the development of new mining techniques and mechanisation, the industry has been in an almost perpetual state of crisis; we have been involved in a constant battle for our very existence as a major industry, and when one has regard to all that has happened, it is not surprising that frustration, disenchantment and disappointment should be rife.

But self-pity will get us nowhere. Neither will speeches that create alarm and despondency. I would not deny the right of members to know the truth, but those of us who hold responsible positions within the industry owe it to the members to distinguish between facts and forecasts; for, I have yet to meet the person who can predict the future with

certainty, hence my conviction that predictions that damage the image are misleading and irrelevant and certainly do nothing to improve the prospects of the industry.

Basically, the future of coal—and I insist it has a future—in which your livelihood as well as that of every other member of this Union is inevitably bound up, will depend on what we—all sections of the industry—do to build a more efficient and better coalmining industry. We really must understand that to survive as an industry, we must face up to the consequences of a changing pattern of energy consumption and to the needs of the national economy in the seventies.

In circumstances in which the nation took over an inefficient and completely inadequate industry from private enterprise, and requiring as it did a major re-organisation with all the attendant burdens, both financial and in terms of social upheaval, which have taken a heavy toll, both of the industry's resources as well as the communities dependent on it, we were entitled to expect substantial assistance from the Government. To the extent that coal can be expected to make a worthwhile contribution within the national economy over the next decade or so, and it is necessary to complete the modernisation programme in order to equip the industry to do this, it is imperative that the Government should continue its support.

We have talked long and loud about the need for a national fuel policy and I do not propose on this occasion to restate the arguments that have been advanced over the last twelve years or so, in support of our plea, except, that I want to make it absolutely clear that despite the scepticism displayed by so many people in regard to our claim, I remain unshaken in the belief that coal remains a great source of wealth which should be exploited to the full in the best interests of the nation.

During the past twelve months, your officials have missed no opportunity to advance the claims of the Union, and to publicize our views on the need to maintain a strong and sizeable coalmining industry, and have continued to press for Government action designed to minimise the effect of the social consequences of change, particularly in those areas where, for a century or more, the industrial and commercial activities and community services have been based predominantly on mining. We have made our views known directly to the Prime Minister, both formally and informally, as well as to the Minister of Power; we have discussed our difficulties with Members of Parliament and with the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, when we have stressed the tragic consequences for the nation's economy that would flow from any further unrestricted contraction of the coalmining industry and consequently our opposition to any policy which would involve the wider use of imported fuels to the exclusion of indigenous fuel.

To digress for a moment, here I would make the point that our concern in this connection is not some mere fetish. As most of you will know, we have consistently warned of the dangers of an indiscriminate contraction of the industry and have urged the need for long-term planning of investment and production programmes rather than permit of the industry's plans to move erratically along lines dictated by short-term considerations alone. We have stressed, time and time again, that the very nature of the coalmining industry precludes any sudden restoration of its productive capacity to make good a threatened shortfall in energy and fuel production. Events over recent months have provided clear evidence

which support and justify the fears we have been expressing over the years; we are told that an expansion of steel production now planned in many countries, could well create a set of circumstances in which the demand for coking coal far outstrips production. The irony, indeed the tragedy, of the situation in which we could well face a world shortage of coking coal in the fairly immediate future, is that not only in this country, but in Europe and other parts of the world, millions of tons of reserves of coking coal have been abandoned as a result of policies dictated by events in the short-term which have led to the contraction of the productive potential of the coalmining industries of so many countries over the last decade or so.

But still, after years of discussion and argument, we have failed to overcome what is, whether we like it or not, a very widely-held view that coal is on its way out. In this connection, we have to understand that whilst we can command considerable sympathy, and, indeed, widespread support, for our claim for still more dynamic action in resolving the problems of those men who are made redundant and whose future livelihood depends on finding alternative employment, often, it is the very people who rally to our cause in seeking to mitigate the burden of the social consequences of change, who accept the contraction of the coalmining industry as inevitable; who accept the fall in the consumption of solid fuel as a quite natural consequence of a changing pattern of energy consumption which they regard as progress in the field of fuel technology and utilisation.

I believe we have reached the point where it is no longer of any consequence to dwell in the past. Hundreds of thousands of words have been written and spoken in our efforts to withstand the forces of change as it has affected the size of the coalmining industry, but unpalatable as it is, we have to face the fact that despite the assistance given to the industry by the Government, the demand for solid fuel has fallen consistently over the past decade.

Our main preoccupation, I suggest, should be with the need to stabilise the demand for coal into the early seventies in order that we might reap the benefits of a modernised coalmining industry. In circumstances in which the state of the national economy demands that the greatest possible use should be made of the country's natural resources, it would be a tragedy if all the advantages of a reorganised industry, now so near to attainment, were to be squandered through lack of reasonable understanding and foresight.

Here, I want to make it clear, that the coalmining industry that I want to see in the seventies is not one based on a productive capacity of the order of 120 million tons per annum as forecast in the Government's White Paper or the alternative figure of 135 million tons as advanced by the National Coal Board, but a sound and efficient industry, not smaller than we have today, and accepted as a necessary and essential part of the nation's industrial economy.

What are the prospects for this?

Some six months ago, in a New Year message to the industry, I predicted that the rather more favourable trends that had emerged in the latter part of 1968 would continue into 1969 and that we could look forward to the future with greater hope of stability and security than had been our lot over the last few years.

Events so far into 1969 have justified my optimism of six months ago. In focusing your attention on the facts of the coalmining industry over the recent past, I hope, too, they will serve to remind the Minister, who will be with us later in the week, that concerned as he is with the nation's future energy requirements and how best they can be met, he cannot afford to ignore the impressive record of progress that has been a feature of the coalmining industry since the Government published its White Paper on Fuel Policy in November, 1967.

Productivity in the coalmining industry, as measured by output per manshift worked, increased during 1968 by more than 9 per cent; true this most impressive rate of improvement has not been maintained over the last six months. but even so, a further increase of nearly 7 per cent. is, I suggest, no mean feat. I am not unaware that there are those who argue that the closure of many of the less efficient collieries has inevitably contributed in the process of averaging, to an improved arithmetical result, and who, because of this, question the credibility of our claim to have made real and substantial progress in this connection. If it satisfies any of the inveterate pessimists, I acknowledge this to be so, but this does not alter the fact that significant progress has been made at those collieries that remain in production. Let me, in support of this view, quote the example of two Coal Board areas where, fortunately, there have been no colliery closures in recent years, and consequently the statistics are not distorted in any way; first, the Doncaster Area where o.m.s. has increased by some 24 per cent. over the last two years, and secondly, the North Nottinghamshire Area where, if the increase of a little in excess of 10 per cent. is less spectacular than that of the Doncaster Area, it has to be understood that we are, here, dealing with outstanding productivity levels of some 40 per cent. above the national average.

Another heartening feature of the industry's operations is that for the first time in six years coal consumption in 1968 showed a slight improvement, and that this has continued into 1969; indeed, disposals are running at the highest level we have experienced for three years. It is only right that we should understand and acknowledge that a contributory factor to this more encouraging state of affairs has been the extra tonnage used by the C.E.G.B. for the generation of electricity under the Government's subsidy provisions of the 1967 legislation, but when we compare last year's higher rate of coal consumption with the fall in demand of some 22,500,000 tons over the two previous years, we are entitled to be somewhat more optimistic about what the future holds for us.

Neither has the increase in the demand for coal been confined to the inland market. Exports, too, have improved, but in this sector of the market the improvement has been even more dramatic and encouraging; 1968 saw exports increase by some 42 per cent. and so far this year there has been a further increase of nearly 65 per cent; indeed, exports at the present time are at the highest level since 1965. Not only does this mean increased resources for the coalmining industry but at current prices it is fair to assume that through exports of solid fuel this year, the coalmining industry will contribute no less than £20 million towards solving this country's balance of payments problem; an added reason, I suggest, why people should adopt a more enlightened attitude towards the coalmining industry.

It is encouraging to note, also, that the more gloomy forecasts in respect of manpower that were being projected some nine months ago, did not materialise. Since October, 1968, when the fall in manpower had reached its peak of 60,000 in twelve months, there has been a steady and consistent improvement both in juvenile as well as adult recruitment and a significant reduction in both voluntary and involuntary wastage. What is particularly encouraging is the fact that juvenile recruitment during the first six months of this year has almost doubled that of the same period in 1968; it is also gratifying to note that the number of redundancies has fallen by some 53 per cent. as compared with twelve months ago; but voluntary wastage remains comparatively high, accounting for nearly 50 per cent. of total wastage. The effect of all this is that the weekly reduction in manpower over the last six months has been substantially lower than what we were experiencing last year.

Here, I would make the point that whilst we cannot be satisfied with the results of the Government's efforts to provide alternative employment in those areas where mining employment is on the wane and we believe that more must be done in this connection—and your National Officials again stressed this when they met the Prime Minister and other Ministers in May—it is misrepresentation in the extreme to suggest that the situation in certain areas today can be compared with the position of those areas in the thirties. When people point to the manpower exodus of 57,000 in 1968 to support this contention they are ignoring the fact that more than 29,000 of those who left the industry last year, left of their own volition to move, in most cases, into other employment. I leave it to the conscience of those delegates and members who lived through the thirties to judge whether the comparison is a fair one or not.

Increasing efficiency and productivity, greater stability in demand both in the inland and export markets, a higher level of recruitment and a lower rate of wastage, all add up to a brighter future, and, as I said recently, mirrors an industry that intends to stay in business in a big way. It is in this context that I would urge that Government policies and decisions in respect of fuel and power should be designed to further encourage the development of the vast potential of a reconstructed coalmining industry, now so dramatically revealing itself through the industry's record-breaking performances.

In making this point, I accept that we shall have to come to terms with natural gas and nuclear power, but as I said two years ago, it would be a grave mistake to base any judgment as to the future level of demand for coal on what are obviously confused and conflicting claims as to the merits of nuclear power as an alternative fuel. By way of a further warning, I would instance recent reports from the United States of America which refer to delays experienced in the construction programmes of a number of proposed nuclear power stations, the failure to complete these construction programmes within the anticipated cost levels and the claim that because of certain miscalculations, there is a cost disadvantage in respect of nuclear power as against coal-fired stations. Until this present uncertainty is cleared up, there is, I insist, need for caution.

I believe that we have to recognise and understand that there is a limit to the support and assistance we can expect for the coalmining industry from the national exchequer; I believe we have to recognise and accept the changing trend in consumer preference, if for no other reason than in

circumstances in which the market offers suitable alternatives, the consumer will buy what best suits his needs, and pocket. As I have said before, consumers are swayed in their choice of fuel, not by sentiment or political and human considerations, but by price, convenience and availability.

The size of this industry in the seventies and thereafter will depend on our success in demonstrating and convincing potential customers of our ability as an industry to compete with alternative fuels. This is the challenge that we must be prepared to take up; it will certainly involve our continued acceptance of change.

If we want to survive as a major industry, a continuation of the policy of closing grossly uneconomic collieries and concentrating production on a smaller number of highly efficient units is inevitable. As I said at Swansea last year, "I do not underestimate the painful consequences of this policy; I do not deny that reorganisation has imposed a heavy burden on many of our members and their families, but the answer to the problem that faces us, does not lie in seeking the indefinite preservation of grossly uneconomic collieries. The burden of sustaining collieries in production which in the aggregate have lost some millions of pounds annually, and in respect of which all the technical advice holds out no hope of improvement, can only, in the ultimate, endanger the future of other collieries which could otherwise expect to continue in production as reasonably viable units."

I do not believe that there is a feasible alternative to this, but it is essential that the sacrifices required of those directly affected by the kind of changes that reorganisation entails, will not be in vain. At the same time I would stress the all-important consideration of the pace at which change can be reasonably accommodated. This means that we must continue to seek the maximum possible assistance for those who are displaced, including special and urgent action to provide alternative employment for those isolated communities where mining has been the only basic employment in particular localities.

For those who remain in the industry, I believe they are entitled to expect to share the rewards that should accrue as a consequence of the steadily increasing efficiency which is currently an outstanding feature of the industry's activities.

I said recently that I considered we were on the threshold of steady improvement. I believe 1969 can see some tangible result of this. In this connection, our constant aim as a Union, and this aspiration should be shared by the National Coal Board, must be to ensure that the industry offers its employees rewards commensurate to the value of the service rendered.

We have our policy as a Union for a £15 a week surface, and £16 a week underground, national minima; no one can regard this as anything but a modest claim, particularly when it is understood that such standard grade rates, because of the control which we exert under our national agreement, would in fact be the actual earnings of thousands of men working a normal working week.

But if we are to attract and retain the manpower required by the industry of the future, we shall need, in my view, to review the whole basis of the day-wage structure, to take account of changes that have taken place since it was established in 1955; for whereas the original structure had to take such form as was necessary to accommodate skilled,

not-so-skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, the introduction of the Mining Apprenticeship Scheme some four years ago, the main object of which was to train juvenile recruits in a wide range of jobs thus preparing them as skilled, versatile mineworkers as demanded by the rapidly changing production techniques and advancing technology of the industry, calls for a fundamentally new approach to this question. It could be that the day-wage structure to fit the conditions of the seventies would need only to accommodate skilled and semi-skilled jobs; but whilst this is a matter for conjecture, I am satisfied we shall not retain the necessary manpower for this industry if we expect men, who, through the Apprenticeship Scheme, have acquired the knowledge and range of skills so essential in modern mining, to take up jobs which are presently assimilated to the lower reaches of the day-wage structure.

Many of you will know that I have consistently stressed, over the years, that the Union should play a positive role in seeking to develop the right attitudes and sound policies which would serve to influence future developments in this still great industry; the potential is still there, which means there is a great opportunity for us all to make the industry viable, our livelihood safe, and more plentiful in its rewards.

There is, however, no place for cynicism and bitterness. It is for us—local representatives as well as national officials of the Union, workmen and management—to make the most of the great potential that resides in the huge capital investments like the Longannet complex in Scotland, the Lynemouth/Ellington/Alcan development in Northumberland and many others, for they represent, in a very real way; the future of this industry.

Inevitably, in discussing the current situation in the coalmining industry and its future prospects we cannot avoid becoming involved in an examination of Government policy in respect of fuel, and coal in particular.

I believe we are fast reaching the point where we must all ask ourselves whether we can afford to indulge in irresponsible and negative criticism of the Government, for what concerns me is that having used any and every pretence to abuse them—often to the point of shamefully distorting the facts—the minds of people will have been so conditioned to believe ill of the Government, that this could result in the most serious repercussions for the Labour Party at the next General Election.

Obviously, we have had our differences with the Government; for my own part, I am convinced that the forecast of coal's share of the energy market of the future as written into the White Paper on Fuel Policy will be shown, in the course of time, to have been underestimated. But this is a difference of opinion on a matter of judgment; it does not entitle any of us to hurl allegations of broken promises and the like at the Government.

What was the 1966 General Election pledge of the Labour Party in respect of coal? It was, that "everything depends upon efficiency, costs and the resulting prices. If more can be profitably sold, then no barrier will stand in the way of expansion." We have been told by the Government that there is no question of requiring any arbitrary run-down in production; that the precise level of coal demand in the 1970s will depend on the extent to which productivity can be raised and costs brought down; that the greater the industry's success in reducing costs, the higher coal demand is likely to be in the coming years; is this so very different from the commitment in the 1966 manifesto? Let us take the

most recent statement by the Prime Minister on Coal (which was made in response to the joint Labour Party/N.U.M. deputation on 7th May last) when he said: "The higher the level of coal sales the industry can achieve through the success of its own efforts to modernise itself and to reduce its costs through increased productivity the better the Government will be pleased. In the longer run the size of the industry will be primarily determined by its success, with the substantial support and encouragement of the Government, in reducing costs." I leave it to you to judge whether such a statement can rightly be regarded as a breach of the General Election pledge, that everything depends on efficiency and costs and that there would be no limit to what could be profitably sold.

No rigid production targets have been set for coal; no limit has been set on the level of sales; why then the charge of breach of faith? Or is it that we are being asked to disregard the policy manifesto on which this Government was elected, and go back to 1964?

Clearly, before 1964, when the Labour Party were in Opposition they consistently criticised successive Tory Governments for failing to take any positive steps to assist the coal industry and for not making proper use of the nation's resources. We interpreted this criticism as support for our own policy of maintaining an industry with an annual production potential of some 200 million tons, but it was the absence of any firm commitment as to its fuel policy in the long-term, that prompted the decision of our own Economic Committee in February 1964 to approach the Labour Party to ascertain how far a Labour Government would be committed.

The undertaking subsequently given by the Chairman of the Labour Party's Home Policy Committee was interpreted by me, at the 1964 Annual Conference, as an assurance "that the industry's output should be maintained at round about 200 million tons per annum," but it has to be said that the undertaking was qualified by the Party's concern about cost levels in the industry and their unwillingness to be involved in formulating a fuel policy which could commit a Labour Government to any kind of long-term subsidy for the coal industry, hence the undertaking to maintain the industry's output at around 200 million tons "at least in the short run."

But, let us understand that no such pledge was included in the 1964 General Election manifesto of the Labour Party; and here I would remind you, that the policy as laid down by the Party's Annual Conference means that coal is expected to find its future role within the context of an overriding fuel policy based on the maximum economic use of indigenous fuels, and allowing for consumer preference

We all share a deep concern at the course of events in the coalmining industry, but before you apportion blame and pass judgment, I ask you to consider all the facts, and also seriously study the alternatives.

The Labour Government, since 1964, motivated in their attitude towards coal by the same reasoning that impelled them when in Opposition to criticise the Tory Government for their failure to assist the industry, has given more practical assistance to the coalmining industry than any other Government.

Since Labour took office in 1964 the industry has been relieved of £415 million of its capital debt—much of which had accumulated during the 13 years of Tory rule—which has meant an annual saving to the

coalmining industry of approximately £35 million in interest and depreciation charges.

The Government has maintained the tax on fuel oil and the ban on coal imports—in spite of considerable pressure from industrialists and other supporters of the Tories to withdraw this protection; and here I would make the point that when it is suggested that these measures are less important and give little direct help, this must not be taken by the Minister as an invitation by the Coal Industry to remove them.

Under the 1967 legislation, the Government have set aside a further £130 million to assist the coalmining industry; £45 million of this is being used to increase the consumption of coal by the Electricity Industry beyond what it would otherwise wish to burn, and some £85 million will be used to alleviate the social consequences of re-organisation.

When you come to make your choice I hope you will remember that in the five years immediately before the Labour Government took office, some 220 collieries were closed and manpower fell by nearly 200,000. I am not unmindful of the fact that although the pattern of the last five years has been much the same, the impact on what is inevitably a smaller industry has been so much greater; but the significant difference between these two periods, is that under the Tories, the only assistance given to our members was through the normal industrial arrangements, the cost of which was a direct financial burden on the coalmining industry itself; unlike what we have experienced under Labour there was no Government assistance under the Tories.

Unlike some Movements where the aspirations of the majority are conditioned by the will of the minority, it is the long and proud tradition of our Labour Movement that our policies and activities are matters for open discussion and debate. I would not have it any other way, but acceptance of this principle entails, in the ultimate, respect for majority decisions.

Inevitably, in the hurly-burly of open debate the point of view of, what is often, the vociferous minority, tends to obscure many of the worthwhile achievements of the majority, and it is because of this that I want to conclude this Address by reminding you of some, at least, of the achievements of the Labour Government.

When Labour came to power in 1964, we inherited an economy with a built-in balance of payments deficit. Fundamental structural changes were required and in this connection, overseas defence expenditure is being cut, the outflow of capital has been reduced from £370 million in 1964 to £39 million in 1968. We have had devaluation which has strengthened our competitive position overseas; exports increased in 1968 by some 14 per cent., indeed, 1968 was the first year of export-led growth which Britain has experienced for the past 15 years.

Much has been done in connection with export promotion and import substitution, but the Government has realised that only by a complete overhaul of the country's industrial structure could the balance of payments constraint be finally removed. The first priority in this connection was the development of the Regions. Government aid to Development Areas is now running at ten times the 1964-5 level; new investment grants, the Regional Employment Premium. 103 Advance Factories plus the deliberate use of Industrial Development Certificates—are all bringing new life to the less prosperous areas.

The restrictions on the manufacturing powers of nationalised industries have been removed; Railways have now been placed on a realistic footing, with some 200 uneconomic but vital rail services being subsidised as a social service.

Steel has been nationalised and a vast programme of extension and reorganisation is under way. Under the influence and with the backing of the Ministry of Technology considerable progress has been made in the Computer and Machine Tool industries.

Twenty-six Industrial Training Boards are now in operation covering some 16 million workpeople; six of these Boards have established their own training centres. All of this has been developed since 1964. Government Training Centres now train 18,000 persons a year—a fourfold increase on 1964.

Let us, too, acknowledge what has been done in the field of social spending. Five thousand new schools built since 1964; we are spending 70 per cent. more than in 1963/4 on Education; by the end of 1968 schemes for Comprehensive education had been approved for 119 out of 163 local education authorities.

Spending on Health and Welfare has also increased by some 70 per cent. on 1963/4; 61 Health Centres have opened since we came to power (compare this with 21 opened in thirteen years of Tory Government) and another 70 are in course of construction. £1,000 million to back the Hospital Plan, over the ten years from 1965.

By the end of this year 2 million new homes will have been built since Labour took office. The Rent Act provided protection from eviction for millions of tenants and thousands have benefited from leasehold reform. Rate Rebates for over a million householders; £15 million paid out in one year, compared with £200,000 in two years under the Tories. The Government has sought and achieved greater fairness and social justice through our tax system. 1,100,000 people with low incomes will pay no income tax as a result of this year's budget. There has been the Capital Gains Tax and Land Levy, reduction in business expense allowances, the closing of tax loopholes and tighter taxation on inherited wealth—all designed to bring about a more fair spread of taxation. The Corporation Tax has encouraged companies to re-invest in modern plant.

Looking to the future, the Government is committed to a new deal for merchant seamen; to the nationalisation of docks and the creation of a new modern port system; in the field of education, the total elimination of '11-plus' and the firm establishment of the comprehensive principle; a new wide-ranging Factory Act is on its way; a new earnings-related pension scheme is to be introduced which will gear pensions directly to the needs of the average wage earner.

All this, and much more, represents the positive achievements of the Labour Government. Some of you will point to the fact that part of this huge programme has not yet paid off, but did you honestly expect to build a better Britain in five years. No country in the world has successfully brought about the kind of transformation that we have in mind, in such a short space of time.

I believe, that much to the disappointment and annoyance of certain people in this country, recent events have done much to consolidate the ranks of Labour.

Less than a month ago, many of us who believe it is in the interests of our country that the Labour Party should stay in office as the

Government following the next General Election, were somewhat apprehensive at the possible outcome of the discussions between the Government and the T.U.C.

Following the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions the T.U.C. General Council had endorsed the Commission's central conclusion that the best way of promoting good industrial relations was to deal with the causes of disputes and it recognised that this could best be achieved through voluntary collective bargaining.

The General Council whilst recognising that a number of proposals subsequently included in the Government's White Paper—'In Place of Strife'—and intended as a basis of legislation, e.g. the right of a person to belong to a trade union, the requirement for employers to recognise and negotiate with trade unions, safeguards against unfair dismissals, the application of the status quo principle in connection with industrial disputes, could help to improve industrial relations and promote trade union objectives, took up an attitude of opposition to the Government proposal to provide for punitive measures against workpeople when involved in industrial action in defiance of agreed procedures.

A Special Congress of the T.U.C., held just a month ago, decided by an overwhelming majority to endorse the attitude of the General Council in its opposition to legal sanctions against workpeople, in welcoming other Government proposals to improve industrial relations and strengthen the trade unions and empowered the Council to take further action for the purpose of assisting in the improvement of procedures and in the settlement of disputes.

In the discussions with the Government since 5th June, the single purpose of the General Council has been to reach an understanding with the Government on the basis of the decisions of the Croydon Congress. The outcome of those discussions, resulting in the assurance of the Government not to introduce legal sanctions against workpeople during the lifetime of the Government and the undertaking of the General Council to confirm its intention to extend the authority it already has to intervene in official stoppages of work to cover unauthorised and unconstitutional stoppages, to clarify the application of Congress Rule 11 and to use its influence to effect just settlements of differences where they precipitate a stoppage, was highly commendable and would, I am certain, have given considerable satisfaction to the great mass of Labour Party supporters.

True, it can be shown that there are other factors which are responsible for a far greater loss of production in this country than the loss arising from industrial disputes, but for myself, I believe it is right that the trade unions should be seen to be willing to work for an improvement in industrial relations.

The attitude of those who would have it otherwise, can bear only one interpretation, unless, of course, they would have preferred the Government to proceed to legislate for legal sanctions; it is that they would prefer industrial anarchy to ordered procedures; they would prefer to foster grievances without regard for the harmful effect of industrial disputes on the nation's economy and the untold hardship imposed on scores of thousands of workpeople, many of whom are not directly concerned with the particular dispute.

I share the view of many of my predecessors who served this organisation as national officials, that to seek to improve industrial

relations is wholly consistent with our objectives as a Union, viz., to advance and protect the interests of the members.