

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

THE PRESIDENT: Chairman and colleagues, we meet at a time when this Union and indeed the industry has been through a traumatic period in our history. In my last Presidential Address I predicted that within 12 months British Coal would seek to close at least 20 pits as they pursued the Tory dream of a small privatised coal industry. I also warned that this pit closure programme would be designed so that all its costs, including redundancies, would be borne by taxpayers or even more directly by mineworkers themselves, and would include the use of pension fund moneys. I reminded Conference that ever since 1979 the Tory Government has consistently and deliberately ignored the unanswerable case for maintaining and developing a British deep mined coal industry, with over 1,000 years of coal reserves, with clean coal technology. What we have seen in the past period is the Tories ruthlessly pursue a vindictive policy of pit closures and job losses with ideological determination as they seek to wipe out the advances made since nationalisation by the National Union of Mineworkers.

The accuracy of my prediction and all the union's warnings was confirmed by Michael Heseltine's announcement on 13th October, 1992. This announcement, as speakers extending Fraternal Greetings have indicated, produced a sense of outrage unparalleled in recent years from all sections of the British people, and led to a storm of demonstrations and protest marches and public meetings in all parts of Britain. Many observers have wondered why the pit closure announcement unleashed such public fury. There are those who have put it down to historical

sentiment, a feeling about miners and about mining communities, but I suggest there was much more to it than that.

The fact is that over the past decade, before, during and ever since the year long strike of 1984-85, our Union has continued to fight against what we believe is wrong. We have argued that trade unionism is about principles, about vision and ideals and we have refused to surrender our belief in what is right or what is just.

The N.U.M. has demonstrated resistance to the ruthless policies of British Coal and the Tory Government. That is why the Tories hate the N.U.M. so much. That is why they have gone to such lengths to try and destroy us. By the same token I believe it is one basic reason why the British people last autumn surged in alongside us to protest at the pit closure plan.

The Tory Government was obviously stunned by the uproar. Playing for time, the Government did a body swerve – not a U-turn by any means – and on 19th October announced a moratorium on 21 of the 31 pits threatened with closure, but it insisted to many people inexplicably, that 10 collieries should close immediately.

Two days later we witnessed the first of two massive public demonstrations in London: on Wednesday, 21st October, nearly 200,000 people crowded into the nation's capital. Four short days later on Sunday, 25th October, 250,000 men, women and children from all walks of life marched through London's streets in pouring rain demanding the Government stop the senseless slaughter of Britain's vital coal mining industry.

The Government had been forced – temporarily – to abandon plans for the immediate closure of the 31 pits, but its central strategy remained unchanged. British Coal ordered the production in 10 pits that were immediately threatened to be halted. Michael Heseltine set up an energy review by the Department of Trade and Industry. Two House of Commons Select Committees, the Employment Select Committee and the Trade and Industry Select Committee, launched their own inquiries into the closure plans, whilst over in the E.C., the European Parliament's Energy Committee conducted its own inquiry.

The National Union of Mineworkers prepared and presented detailed evidence to all these reviews and investigations.

We consistently explained that anyone who believed that the attack on us was an isolated one was blind to the economic and social realities. It was and it is part of a much wider programme which will involve the loss of not only 30,000 miners' jobs, but a further 70,000 with the closure of 17 coal-fired power stations, at least 10 rail depots, dozens of engineering works and the loss of still more jobs in other industries and services directly or indirectly connected with mining.

What is happening to us is also part of what we have seen happen to the National Health Service, education, our social services and local government. In sum, it is an attack on everything that our class has been able to win in a century of struggle.

In our evidence to all of these bodies we should and indeed proved conclusively that it is only the existence of a "rigged" energy market which led to the pit closure announcement on 13th October, 1992. We proved that electricity produced by coal is 350 times cheaper than nuclear power; at least 30 per cent cheaper than from unnecessary gas-fired power stations, and don't forget that gas reserves will exist within 21 years, and it is at least 30 per cent cheaper than either imported coal which in the main is subsidised or French nuclear-generated electricity, which together add over £1 billion to Britain's already appalling balance of payments problems.

Meanwhile, the N.U.M. in consultation with the T.U.C. commenced legal action against the President of the Board of Trade and also against British Coal, who were doing all in their power to force our members to leave the 10 pits immediately under threat, thereby closing those collieries by stealth.

In December, two Judges, in a very rare move as far as the National Union of Mineworkers is concerned, decided that the closure plans announced of 13th and

19th October were in violation of British and European employment law and in violation of the coal industry's own review procedure, and as a consequence were "unlawful" and "irrational". The Judges made a declaration that all 10 pits threatened with immediate closure should be the subject of an investigation by the industry's own Modified Colliery Review Procedure, or a procedure substantially to the same effect.

Inexplicably, however, the Judges refused to order a resumption of production at the 10 pits. Within weeks it was obvious that British Coal – and the Government – would ignore the Judges' ruling as far as consultation and the independent review was concerned.

We have had five meetings with British Coal and it was apparent to us that they had no intention of implementing the industry's own Colliery Review Procedure or substituting something substantially to the same effect. The reason? They were terrified that the case against closure would be heard by someone of independent mind, and if that had been the case they knew and we knew the case for closure would be rejected.

Our detailed case against the closures had meanwhile been presented to and accepted by the House of Commons Employment Select Committee. It had also been before and accepted by the independent inquiry established by the Energy Committee of the EEC, and it is important that this Conference and the media generally understand that two of those inquiries established in the wake of the pit closure announcement have firmly come down in support of keeping all 31 pits threatened with closure open.

Inexplicably, however, the Trade and Industry Select Committee whilst accepting that the pit closure plans were directly related to a rigged energy market, refused to recommend those measures necessary to correct the imbalance and provide a level economic playing field.

The Select Committee's unanimous report not only refused to cut back on nuclear power, it actually recommended an increase in its use. It failed to halt the dash for gas or stop imports of coal and French nuclear-generated electricity. I say with some sadness, to the shame of the four Labour Members on that Committee, it recommended an increase in miners' working hours and an extended working week, something which even previous Tory governments had actually resisted.

This unanimous report effectively gave the green light to Michael Heseltine and the DTI, which pushed ahead with the pit closure plan, using the Trade and Industry Select Committee's recommendations as justification.

There are lessons here which our Union and the entire Labour movement must take to heart from that experience. I must stress again my view that in putting their names to that unanimous report the four Labour Members of the Select Committee made a tragic mistake. The report was both a setback and a turning point in an extraordinary campaign which had involved hundreds of thousands of people between October and February. I ask you in this Conference to think, if the four Labour MPs had refused to endorse that report and produced a minority report in line with N.U.M., T.U.C. and Labour Party policy, it would have put this Government in the same dilemma it faced in October, 1992. It would have taken the fight to save our pits forward, giving a tremendous boost not just to our members and colleagues in those industries connected to us, but to everybody in Britain who feels increasingly alienated and angry at the way this Government treats the citizens of our nation.

Despite the effect of that report and despite a refusal by the T.U.C. or the Labour Party leadership to support or endorse any form of effective direct action, we have fought on. We have had no choice.

In our bid to win public support we have marched further than Mao Tse Tung, we have joined with Churches of every denomination and campaigned alongside groups from all sections of society. We have won the argument hands down and yet this Government has remained impervious to logic.

Therefore, in March, together with R.M.T., the N.U.M. balloted, calling on our members to take part in a series of 24-hour strikes, and it is a tremendous tribute to our members and their families that in a climate of fierce intimidation by British Coal and with no support from the T.U.C. or the Labour leadership, they returned a magnificent 60 per cent "Yes" vote for industrial action, and no-one in this movement should under-estimate what took place in the course of that ballot and in the course of that campaign. (*Applause*)

The first 24-hour strike was planned for 2nd April, a date which had not been plucked out of the air. It was the date upon which the European Trade Union movement had called on workers throughout Europe to become involved in some form of action against the evil of unemployment. It was also the very last day when the N.U.M. could implement its ballot decision to take strike action under the Tories' anti-trade union laws, but equally important it was after the DTI White Paper had been debated in Parliament. Do you recall those in our movement who actually believed that the Tories would come almost like white knights to the rescue of our industry? When the chips were down they were as scarce as snowflakes in summer, and when the vote was taken they reverted to type and voted with a Conservative administration.

The two days of action, in the main ignored by many in the media, resulted on each occasion in over 6 million workers who did not or could not go to work, with catastrophic financial results for an already battered British economy. British Coal and British Rail have both admitted in writing that the two days of action cost the two industries £20 million each. The £20 million loss in British Coal, together with the loss in production, care and maintenance costs and payment of wages to miners paid not to produce coal at the 10 pits, has cost the Government and British Coal £450 million between October, 1992, and July, 1993. I ask you, to consider the sum of money involved, for £450 million we told the DTI and we told the Trade and Industry Select Committee that it would be sufficient to provide a subsidy to enable our industry, even within the rigged market, to sell 25-30 million tonnes of coal over the next 5 to 10 years into Europe, even without referring to the electricity generating market, and one has got to ask what is going on in Britain when for £450 million they could preserve 100,000 jobs, and yet they are prepared to squander taxpayers' money trying to destroy mining communities and the livelihoods of all those who work in our industry, along with rail, engineering and the associated industries.

In addition, and I say it quite slowly for the media, if the £450 million deliberately squandered by this Government between October and the end of June, 1993, added to the £1 billion earmarked by Heseltine for redundancies, was made available to the mining industry, £1.5 billion, even within the rigged energy market, is sufficient to keep open every one of the 51 pits operated by British Coal, and there is no industry, no energy in the world, could compete against ours. We have to question the politics, the economics and the morality of a Government which is prepared to spend £1.5 billion destroying jobs rather than pumping that money into an industry in order to maintain jobs and maintain a standard of life.

The Government, seeking to prevent the detailed case against pit closures being heard by an independent inquiry and at the same time head off more 24-hour strikes, ordered an intensification of British Coal's blackmail tactics against our members, using redundancy terms as their weapon. These tactics created panic amongst our members, resulting in a massive haemorrhage of manpower from the industry, initially at the 9 pits earmarked in the second tranche for closure in the White Paper and then in the 10 pits identified in the October 19th announcement. Following their onslaught against the 9 pits, British Coal went back to Court and sought permission to close the 10. The Court now reverted to type and on 26th May gave British Coal the green light to go ahead and close these pits.

In December, the Divisional Court had ruled that the closure plan was "unlawful" and "irrational", and I know our members and many people within our society had difficulty in understanding how a decision in December that was unlawful and irrational suddenly five months later became lawful and rational.

The Union strongly advised our members last October not to give in to the intimidation, bullying and blackmail tactics of British Coal. Those members who heeded our advice it is fair to say as far as wages are concerned are at least £5,000-£6,000 better off than those members who took a decision to leave the industry as a result of the bullying tactics of British Coal late last autumn.

N.U.M. members at Vane Tempest, Parkside and Markham Main and in particular the brave young lad who keeps going in each day and demonstrating he wants the right to work, deserves our congratulations and our praise. (*Applause*) All those members who effectively have been made compulsorily redundant deserve our support. All our members at these 10 pits stood by Union policy, and as a consequence in many cases they have been paid less money than those who received the enhanced terms as a result of blackmail and intimidation by British Coal saying if they did not sign, to withdraw their pit from the appeal procedure, they would receive considerably less money if redundancy took place than if they continued to fight. What type of society do we live in when an employer is so scared of the truth that they have to go to members and threaten them with a loss of £10,000 unless they withdraw the pit from the review procedure? Are they so terrified of listening to the truth? At least I am pleased to tell this Conference that for once the T.U.C. has agreed to establish an independent review procedure and invite British Coal to put forward its arguments in support of closing the 10 pits and listen to our argument against it, and in that way at least we will get out into the open what has been taking place along with the intimidation, blackmail and bullying tactics of British Coal and the Government throughout this period.

It is important that our Union continues to build upon the fight and the campaign not just to maintain our pits but to reopen those pits that have been closed or have stopped production, to win back the jobs of men who must not be lost to our industry or our Union. It may surprise many in the media to know that mineworkers made redundant at a pit only five weeks ago and transferred to a neighbouring pit five miles away, are now being told that they are once again being threatened with redundancy. We are human beings and we have no right to be treated in that way by any employer or by any Government. (*Applause*)

I have no doubt that history will judge what has taken place. The setbacks we have suffered in this the latest phase of our long campaign against pit closures has indeed been magnificent, and I want to place on record at this Conference my deep respect and deep appreciation for all our Areas, Branches and Members, who have supported the N.U.M. and campaigned against the butchery of our industry.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the many support groups, over 1,000 established all over Britain, who have done so much in the national network to promote our case. I would also like to pay a special tribute to our magnificent legal team who fought so valiantly and continue so to do on behalf of our members, and in particular to John Hendy, Q.C., to Keir Starmer and to Jennifer Eady, junior barristers, who have not only worked unstintingly on our behalf but who have donated the whole of their fees to the campaign fund of the National Union of Mineworkers. No thanks of mine is too great. (*Applause*)

Above all, I want to single out one group. I must express on behalf of the entire Union our undying gratitude to those more than anyone else who have campaigned night and day to save our industry, our pits and their communities. I am speaking about the magnificent Women Against Pit Closures who have not flinched from taking direct action against British Coal. They have occupied pits, underground, on the surface and in winding towers. They have occupied colliery offices, British Coal's Headquarters at Eastwood Hall and they have demonstrated with pit camps outside Parliament and the DTI in London. Their pit camps have been an inspiration to workers both at home and internationally, and I humbly suggest that they have in fact set us all an example to follow, and I would like this morning on your collective behalf to salute their courage and their determination which has been and is vital to our fight for the future of the British coalmining industry. (*Standing Ovation*)

It is not my job, but I am sure that the Chairman of the Business Arrangements Committee may take on board the fact that somewhere in the proceedings it may be possible to ask a representative of Women Against Pit Closures who are here today to come and address this Conference and speak, as is their right, to this Conference. (*Hear, hear*)

Our fight against pit closures has, of course, been linked with our campaign against privatisation. We have known since 1979 that we face a Government determined to destroy Britain's nationalised coal industry.

I will repeat today something I said in last year's Presidential Address: I reject absolutely and completely the notion that privatisation of our industry is or has been inevitable. I believe we could have stopped the steady invasion of outside firms, and I believe that we can still stop it. We must consolidate the fight against closures with that against the sell-off of our industry.

We emphasise that workers employed by outside contractors are members of our Union and they will receive the same commitment and the same service as members who work for British Coal. In any situation where miners find themselves working for private enterprise the Union will, as it has always done, represent them to the best of its ability.

British Coal have ended the check-off system, that is how vindictive they are. Because we exercise our democratic right and hold an individual ballot and take strike action, they then stop the check-off arrangements inside our industry. It is worth recalling in 1993 we are one of the very few countries in the world that does not have the legal right to strike. The move they have taken is forcing us and other unions like R.M.T. to return to basics in trade unionism. It is forcing us to begin to agitate, to educate, to organise and to use expertise that many had forgotten and some had never even learned, but we have all been highly successful, and I say this without fear of contradiction, that British Coal may live to rue the day when they stopped the check-off and indeed handed back to the Union a key aspect of organisation to our members and to our organisation.

It is now becoming clear what the sell-off of our industry will mean to mineworkers. Michael Heseltine's White Paper in March and Mr. Clarke, the Chairman of British Coal's article in a Sunday newspaper yesterday, spelled out the Government's determination to repeal the 1908 Coal Mines Act which limits miners' working hours in preparation for privatisation.

Why are we against extended hours? We have only got to look across the Atlantic to the United States where mineworkers suffer a five times higher rate of accidents than here in the UK. That is the so-called benefit of private ownership, or, indeed, look to private mines here in Britain, where accidents over many years have been double the rate of our nationalised industry.

If the 1908 Act is repealed, British Coal will bring in 10 or 12-hour shift patterns and a six or seven day working week with all that means in stress, fatigue and accidents. Our Union utterly rejects the appalling argument of some cynics both in the trade union and political sector who say that the horrendous levels of overtime proves that longer hours are acceptable. They are not.

There is a difference between people voluntarily working overtime to provide for their families or themselves on low basic wages and because of insecurity about the future, and those who are forced every day and every week and every month to work a 10 or 12 hour day and a six or seven day working week. Don't forget that the inevitability of a Continental shift system will result in the elimination of overtime payments and so in effect will have the overtime work but without the overtime pay, and that will become a reality if we allow it to take place. (*Applause*)

In the event of privatisation being forced through I am calling at this Conference on the Labour Party leadership to give an unequivocal commitment to renationalise any and all sections of the British mining industry, all of which have been privatised by the Conservative Government. I put it to John Smith of the leadership of the party, why don't we take principle and policy forward with the same determination

as the Tories? They have no compunction about nationalising or denationalising anything they want. They have no compunction about privatising any section of a nationalised industry, and if our party leadership reflects the policies and the will of our membership it will give to this movement a commitment that when it is next elected it will renationalise this and other industries which have been privatised during 14 years of Tory Government rule. *(Applause)*

Our responsibility is to protect our members, not to offer them up for exploitation at the hands of profiteers, and that responsibility includes pension rights and the management of pension fund monies.

PENSION FUND MONIES

The N.U.M. has long campaigned on the question of ownership and control of pension funds, longer than any other trade union, and it is a sobering thought, is it not, that if our arguments presented to the High Court in 1984 had been accepted, every Mirror Group pensioner would today have their pension fully protected and no other pension fund in Britain would be open to plundering by those who come in in the form of asset stripping.

Pension fund moneys are deferred wages. In our case we can show where we have received less by way of a wage increase in exchange for improvements to our pension, and that the package has represented clearly deferred wages. That is why we have such a powerful case to present later this year when we go to the Court. You will know that British Coal has taken from our industry pension fund in the form of a "contribution holiday" £800 million in the past four years. Now, I'm not a lawyer, but I cannot see any difference between a crook like Maxwell stealing £450 million from Mirror Group pension funds and an employer like British Coal taking in the form of a contribution holiday £800 million from British Coal pension fund, the Mineworkers' Pension Fund. I have got a simple philosophy. Every single penny in the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme should be used for one purpose and one purpose only, to provide improved pensions for those who have retired and for those dependants of our retired members. *(Applause)*

It is only a couple of months ago that Michael Heseltine, it has now been revealed, instructed British Coal to take £480 million surplus from the Corporation's Staff Superannuation Scheme, where we are also represented, to finance the run-down and the sell-off of our industry, fulfilling the prophecy I made a year ago. In other words, not content to sack you, not content to close the pits, not content to destroy the community, they have the audacity to use your pension fund moneys to finance the whole operation. If we lived in a half-decent society they would all be in the dock facing charges of misapplication of moneys which properly belong to our membership. *(Applause)*

I reported on the continuing demands in my Presidential Address last year by British Coal for a slice of the surplus from the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme. The Corporation's actions mean that if we are not successful in our legal challenge, and I believe we will be, that British Coal will not pay any contribution to the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme between 1989 and the year 2001, whilst our members continue to pay their own weekly contributions. I am told that currently they are looking for a further surplus to be declared so they can take a further slice, extending the contribution holiday probably to the year 2005. In essence it simply means they don't take money out of the fund. They stop putting it in. I cannot see any difference. The net effect is that moneys intended for the Pension Scheme ends up in the balance sheet of British Coal, and it is something that has got to stop.

Protection of our members and retired members' pension rights must be a central issue for this Union, and we will do everything in our power, including taking this case to the European Court. Again, for the second time in my speech, I am pleased to tell you that only five days ago the T.U.C. have agreed that our case is not only the most powerful that they have seen, they have actually agreed to help finance the scheme in order that it goes all the way to Europe if necessary in order that that money is repaid and used to pay pensions to all our members past and present.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

I now want to deal briefly if I may with a non-controversial issue, the Trade Unions and the Labour Party. Since 1979 and the General Election defeat there has been an ongoing debate within the Labour Party concerning its structure, organisation, selection procedures and links with trade unions and certainly, the issue of one member, one vote, and the use of so-called block votes. We have seen a succession of "gimmicks" introduced instead of sound policies. In the last General Election campaign we had a campaign orchestrated by spin doctors, with sound bites, red roses and a presentation that could have been presented by a Hollywood script, apart from the fact that the trade union movement was virtually excluded from that campaign, other than the use of our money.

Can I say that it would be remiss of me not to refer to the fact that over the past few days our newspapers and television screens have been filled with allegations and statements about how the Tory Party and the Labour Party have been receiving finance. I understand that the Tories were getting finance from Asil Nadir who is in northern Cyprus. I understand that a Mr. Costa was supplying money to the Labour Party, and it is actually suggested they were operating secret bank accounts, not disclosing who the donors were, not informing their executive committees, they operated offshore trusts and they actually had feeder accounts which paid money through so that leaders of the party claimed they were not sure whether the money had come or not. Well, I am prepared to try and resolve the problem. I am offering the use of the four-man team to go to northern Cyprus and to Greece to investigate this matter. *(Laughter) (Applause)* In order that you should all be informed I am asking Terry Pattinson and Roger Cook to go with them. *(Laughter)*

If one-tenth of the energy that has been deployed in the internal debate, the witch-hunts and the disciplinary procedures had been directed against the Tories and in support of a Socialist programme, I believe that today we would have had a Labour Government instead of this vindictive, discredited and internationally financed Conservative one.

The Labour leadership is now seeking to render the trade unions' role inside the Party ineffectual by removing the block vote and with it the influence which has traditionally sustained the Party whose original commitment was to replace capitalism and not to try to run it more successfully than the Tories.

I feel it is necessary to warn John Smith and the Labour Party leadership that if they persist with their present attempts to diminish the role and influence of trade unions in the Party, there is a real risk that the trade unions, or at least some of them, may well decide that it is time to conceive a new party which will give the same unequivocal commitment in Parliament to our class that the Tory Party gives to its own.

Our Union intends to continue playing its full industrial and political role, including within the Labour Party itself. But we must not forget that the Party was born out of the British trade union movement and we have every right to expect that in relation to that commitment we have a part to play.

We are opposed to any diminishing of the role of trade unions in the affairs of the Labour Party and are fully committed to retaining the block vote. Members of Parliament exercise a block vote. Members of the European Parliament exercise a block vote and the British Government exercises a block vote in the United Nations. They even exercised the block vote last night in supporting the disastrous American attack in Iraq which ought to have been condemned by any person who lays claims to support international law. *(Applause)* Companies exercise block votes by donating to and influencing the Tory Party, but I must confess I did not realise until a week ago we had shares in Hanson. Why is it that the law and everybody in society, apparently, agrees that we can go to a shareholders' meeting and exercise a block vote, but when it comes to deciding the policy of our political party, for some unknown and inexplicable reason there are people who seek to

destroy that long tradition. If they break the link between the Labour Party and the trade unions they in my view will break the commitment of the Party to change fundamentally the society in which we live.

THE N.U.M. – THE WAY AHEAD

The question which this Conference has got to look at is where do we go from here? For over a decade the N.U.M. has been the subject of a ferocious and sustained attack from all sections of the State, particularly from a Tory Government determined to destroy a union it has always perceived as capable of mobilising support for political as well as economic change.

The Tories have never forgiven our Union for 1972 and 1974, and it is this ideological hatred which led to the 1984/85 miners' strike, to the continuing destruction of a valuable and profitable industry, and much human suffering which has resulted from this attack.

We must, of course, look to the future of our Union, because we have not been immune as an organisation from the savage cuts and blows against our own industry. It has resulted in a reduction in staff, in the closure of Union offices and in some cases the closure of Areas, and it is a recognition of that fact that all of us have got to deal with fundamental change.

It has cost our Union over £5.5 million in severance pay arrangements as a direct consequence of this Government's pit closure programme, and yet whilst British Coal and other companies within the industry receive moneys from the British Government and the European Parliament to fully fund its severance arrangements, the N.U.M. has not received one penny. We have written to the European Commissioner, pointing out that in accordance with the 1946 Nationalisation Act our Union plays an integral part in the mining industry and that the cutbacks we have had to endure have been caused by central Government policy.

The European Commissioner has expressed a sympathetic point of view, and indicated that we could get a refund from the British Government of those moneys out of the European funds which have been made available to the British mining industry, and yet to date Heseltine and Eggar and the Tory Government are refusing to provide that financial assistance which is rightfully ours. Why is it right for EEC money to be provided to the mining industry and to British Coal to finance severance arrangements and at the same time deny the same financial aid to the National Union of Mineworkers, who as a direct consequence are suffering cutbacks and difficulties and problems?

Our Union will continue to fulfil its role and provide the best possible service for our members. This can be achieved by recognising the realities of what has taken place, and the effect on our Areas as well as the National Union itself. We will, of course, continue discussions with other unions, and if we were satisfied that our future lay in a merger or an amalgamation then that is a step I am sure we would take.

However, in 1990, and indeed on this year's Conference agenda, we had and we have resolutions calling for the decision of the N.U.M.'s 1944 Founding Conference to be implemented and to establish a single National Union of Mineworkers. Federalism certainly had a role to play in the history of our Union, but in today's situation as we face a highly co-ordinated, concentrated and ruthless enemy, federalism is beginning to sound to me more like feudalism.

Nearly 50 years after our Founding Conference, I echo the words of a delegate from the South Wales Area, who declared that it was the desire to establish one single National Union of Mineworkers. Let all of us individually and collectively waste no more time in turning that hope in 1944 for the future of our Union into a reality.

Chairman, in conclusion let me just say it has been a privilege yet again to serve this Union as its President. (*Standing ovation*)