

VICE-PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

MR K. STANLEY: Delegates, fellow members and guests, it is almost 65 years to the day that the National Union of Mineworkers held its first ever Conference, and it was here in Blackpool at the Albert Hall, on Monday the 25th of June, 1945.

After the successful destruction of the evil forces of fascism and Nazism by the Allied Forces in the Second World War, the NUM President, Will Lawther, urged the Union to be ready for the massive task that lay ahead. He said that the NUM would have to equip itself to deal with the many problems that would face them in the coming years. Some of the problems would be difficult of solution, but as in the years of the Miner's Federation, problems have been met and triumphed over.

The war years had impacted on the coal industry at that time, with the shortage of manpower in the pits dropping to 710,000 miners, with over 100,000 of those over the age of 55. Production levels on saleable tonnage had dropped to 184 million tonnes and needed to be increased to help Britain out of the problem. What a contrast we have today in Britain, with the coal mining industry in the last throes of existence. The closure of Welbeck Colliery in the Nottinghamshire Area this year will reduce the British deep mine coal industry to a mere handful. When coal markets show the resurgence of coal globally, we in Britain continue to view our own energy programme with short term policies.

Britain has missed a golden opportunity to emerge like other countries around the world, supporting a clear mandate for coal as a fuel for the future. We all know that there is technology available today to assist coal being burned cleanly, allowing the

emissions targets to be met and the necessary clean up of the planet to continue.

The attack on fossil fuels by the environmental lobbyists in Britain is meaningless. The global arena is but a mere drop of the emissions we produce. Even if the lobbyists were to succeed in stopping the burn of fossil fuels in Britain, what will they have achieved? We will inevitably see the lights going out, yet elsewhere in the world coal will be burned regardless of the British situation.

What the lobbyists should be doing is targeting our Government, who refuse to totally finance clean coal technology programmes. The Government's approach of beauty parades to determine which energy company wins the right to fit the fully financed demonstration plan for carbon capture is not the way. If Europe is prepared to offer twelve demonstration plans for carbon capture and storage, then this Government should be looking to attain as many of those as they can, not just the one and we'll see how it goes.

The lobby groups should be working with the Union in promoting the technology to clean up fossil fuel burned, but more importantly they should be striving for Britain to be leading the way, pioneering carbon capture and storage on a large scale, and financing all clean coal technologies, so that countries like China and India, who are presently going through their own industrial revolutions, can learn from our position and follow suit.

In 2009 the main coal owner in Britain, UK Coal Mining, announced losses of £129.1 million, compared to losses in the year before of £15.6 million. When the world markets for coal are booming, our industry is in deficit. UK Coal Mining produced just 7 million tonnes of coal in 2009, with a further 2 million tonnes coming from other deep mines, and yet Britain's energy mix shows that coal provided 38% of the overall electricity used. Britain continues to import millions of tonnes of coal every year to meet its requirements, and chooses to ignore the security of supply answer that a reliable fuel like coal, if mined here, can give them. The NUM must continue to promote our own coal industry, and look to expand it at every opportunity.

Last year on wages, the NUM's national negotiating committee secured an excellent wage settlement over a three year period, from 2009 to 2011, for its members employed at UK Coal and the Maltby companies. The wage rise was above inflation, and well above the average wage increases elsewhere in the private sector. This was supplemented by an enhanced sick pay deal, increasing each year over three years, and leading to full pay for miners for twelve weeks off sick.

The NUM continued to work on the Mineworkers Pension Scheme issue, and arising from the 2008 Biannual Conference the Union has produced a document of facts and concerns about the Mineworkers Pension Scheme. The document was presented to the relevant Minister in Government to begin the process of discussion. The follow-up for the Union was to meet with the Minister at the Department of Energy and Climate Change, to seek amendments to the scheme. The 2008 NUM Conference unanimously agreed that the mineworker's were being taken for a ride over the arrangements of the Mineworkers Pension Scheme enforced by a Tory Government in 1994, when the industry was privatised.

These arrangements, supported by the imposed UDM Trustee, allowed the Government of the day to amend the scheme rules and take 50% of any surplus from the pension fund investments because of their guarantee assurances. The promise of a guaranteed minimum pension, they said, would be at the expense of the taxpayer, and therefore the arrangements to share any surplus would be fair. From 1994 to

present day, the taxpayer has not paid one penny piece into the scheme. There has been no new money put into the scheme by the Government, who is now deemed to be our employer, and yet they have taken £4.14 billion of the pension fund money out of the scheme. Since 1987, no employer has paid a penny piece into the scheme, and yet from 1987 to 1994 the miners continued to pay contributions at 5.25% of their gross wage totalling £350 million. How can that be fair?

The NUM must seek further meetings with the new Government to argue that the injustice with the mineworker's pensions must stop. I acknowledge that this will be a difficult task for the Union, with the country in massive debt and with a Tory Government in place who imposed the arrangements in the first place, but we cannot give in.

On safety, I have been proud to hold the position as Chairman of the NUM Safety and Health Committee of the NEC for a number of years, and have had to work with RJB Mining, then UK Coal Mining, under some tense and strange working arrangements. The company has continued to adopt a situation at the pits where they will only deal with the majority union on safety. The situation with UK Coal's record on safety declining on a daily basis was doing nothing to improve the situation, and it was a major concern to the NUM. The Safety Committee warned that there were disasters waiting to happen, and over the last few years our prophecy has sadly come true. Seven fatalities in coal mining over a three and a half year period, plus other major injuries or dangerous incidents occurring on a regular basis, left UK Coal Mining Limited facing the threat of being closed down.

The situation has become dire and the national officials met with the Health and Safety Executive, and the Mines Inspectorate, demanding that the company should be prosecuted for not looking after its workforce. The trend of fatalities could not be centered at one unit alone within the company, as each pit under UK Coal Mining has suffered a fatality, highlighting that the company's safety culture is dreadfully wrong. Unfortunately, to make matters worse, a further fatality occurred at Maltby Colliery, owned by the Hargreaves Group.

With the Health and Safety Executive leaning heavily on UK Coal, with prosecutions already being sought, the Chief Executive Officer for UK Coal wrote out to all stakeholders, including the NUM, asking for help. The NUM of course, even with the restrictions the company placed upon us with the non-recognition in certain areas, still agreed to assist. The Union could not stand by and see miners being killed on a regular basis and do nothing about it. The Union responded with a programme of written recommendations to UK Coal that have been taken seriously, and already improvements in dialogue, and formal meeting with all NUM representatives are now in place.

As late as Monday of this week, Chris Kitchen and I met with the leaders of UK Coal to discuss how to progress further the advances made in the best interests of the entire workforce, regardless of their choice of union. The NUM must continue with this programme to remove the deaths once and for all from all mines.

On the prescribed disease, osteoarthritis of the knee, the national officials met and assisted the TUC member on the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council with detailed information on why miners should be compensated for knee problems. The Union was able to supply reports on the many miners who would qualify for osteoarthritis of the knee. In the initial stages, the NUM report was challenged by IAC, and the NUM went further by employing the services of an ex Mines Inspectorate to supplement our report. A combined comprehensive report was finally agreed in principle by IAC as the

basis for the prescribed disease, A14, to be put to Government. Although the Union was not satisfied with the criteria laid down, at least the acceptance of the disease by Government was a basis to continue seeking improvements upon.

The NUM has held meetings with Lord McKenzie from the Department of Works and Pensions, attempting to remove some of the anomalies that still exist for claimants, and his response was encouraging.

The change of Government should not deter this Union from continuing with its work, aiming to make the prescription even further accessible to the many miners who suffer from the disease.

The Union, heavily leaning on its international connections, on the 18th and 19th of March 2009, organised and hosted the second International Miners Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. The event was tremendous as over twenty coal mining unions from across the globe attended and participated. The Conference unanimously accepted a declaration to combat health and safety, climate change, human and trade union rights, and employment security. Special support was declared to the Mexican coal miners union, Los Mineros, who had bravely stood against the appalling attacks from their Government of Mexico and Grupo Mexico, who were looking to destroy the miners union. The Edinburgh was an inspiration to all present, with a clear mandate of action not words. The NUM Scotland Area was congratulated for the major role they played in organising the entertainment and well being of all our international guests.

The NUM then organised a celebration of the Great Miners Strike, and this was staged here in Blackpool on the 21st of March 2009, with many of our international guests travelling down from Edinburgh to attend. The speakers at this event were all tremendous and the celebration was heralded a great success.

For many years now the Union has been telling Conference that we are close to a deal in selling the Sheffield headquarters, and each year we have been knocked back, we have announced that the way forward has been blocked for one reason or another, and last year was no different. A deal was on the table and it was scuppered because of the 'credit crunch'. Painstakingly the Union continued with its aims, and we met with a new company who have declared an interest. We regard the proposal for this deal to be very, very attractive, and hopefully, fingers crossed, in the very near future, our hard work and commitment to gaining the best deal for the Sheffield offices will pay off.

Since the 2008 Conference the NUM has unfortunately lost two of its tremendous servants from the past. Both were ex national General Secretaries, Lawrence Daly and Peter Heathfield. These men were working class heroes, and exceptional ambassadors of the trade union movement. The history of the NUM will always see these two names at the very forefront of the Union's trials and tribulations, leading the Union through the difficult times with great passion. They will sadly be missed.

The NUM Scotland Area arranged a tremendous send off for Lawrence Daly, who died at the age of 84 on the 23rd of May 2009, by organising a very moving and fitting memorial service in Scotland, attended by almost all of the NUM areas. The importance of the occasion was highlighted by the attendance of the Prime Minister, who along with our President, Ian Lavery, gave very fitting tributes at the service.

Peter Heathfield died aged 81 on the 4th of May 2010, and his body, as Peter wished, was donated to medical science, and although there was no funeral, a memorial service will be held at the Chesterfield Miners Welfare on the 30th of June 2010.

Just the mere mention of these two men, who have served, lived, and breathed the National Union of Mineworkers, must be an inspiration to us all in attendance today at the 2010 Miners Conference. This great Union, although in extremely difficult times, uncertain of the future of the coal industry, must, as Will Lawther urged 65 years ago, be ready for each challenge that lies ahead, and triumph over them.

In conclusion, it would be remiss of me not to mention the outgoing National President, Ian Lavery. Ian was elected as National Chairman in 2002 following the reorganisation of the Union. Conference later changed Ian's title to National President, a position he held with great dignity. Under his leadership the Union has progressed in many fields. New doors were opened, and he has been instrumental in building bridges internationally, and now the Union has very close relationships with a number of countries, all who mine coal. Ian's statement of, "A miner, is a miner, is a miner", has struck a chord with all trade unionists internationally.

Ian has been successful in leading the Labour seat in Wansbeck, and I know he will be a credit to the constituency. The only downside is that he will be a massive loss to the National Union of Mineworkers. I know Ian will work relentlessly in Parliament to promote the case for coal, and what better person to have there than the ex President of this great Union. I am sure Conference will extend wishes to Ian for the future.

With Ian's departure it has given me the opportunity, in my final year as Vice President, of presiding over this Conference, which is a great honour to me. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to address Conference today as the acting President of the National Union of Mineworkers. Thank you. (Applause)