

MERGER WITH LARGER UNIONS TURNED DOWN

Unity to maintain its independence

In his executive report to delegates at the Biennial Conference held in Llandudno on May 13 and 14, general secretary Geoff Bagnall declared that Unity intends to remain as an independent community-based trades union.

Answering questions on the report, Mr Bagnall revealed that Unity had been approached by larger, general unions with a view to merge with them.

"I believe that the NEC made the proper and right decision for Unity to move forward as an independent and community-based trade union, maintaining the bespoke and unique service we provide for our members, which was something a big union could not do.

"This is the view of your National Executive Committee and over the coming months the executive will decide how this decision will be implemented."

He said that in the last two years the union had lost a considerable number of members, with membership currently now standing at just under the 5,000 level.

"Looking further back, in the last 20 years we have lost, on average, 20 members a week, week in week out. That's an incredible figure.

"Following the large number of jobs lost at Wedgwood, Twyfords have announced that they intend to cease production at their Alsager site, with the jobs of just over 100 members at risk."

Mr Bagnall said that over the last 12 months the union had made every effort to cut costs whilst maintaining the same high level of service to members.

"Very sadly the NEC has decided to close down the recruitment department. This decision in no way reflects the

work and initiatives undertaken by the two recruiters." He added that he could not make any further comments at this stage because consultations with the pair were still taking place.

He said that the section of the Resource Centre that finds jobs for members was also to close, as this work has been declining for some time. Mr Bagnall pointed out that members will still be able to use the centre's redundancy assistance programmes, which helps with retraining opportunities.

Investing

If Unity was to stay independent and rebuild itself, it needed a strong financial base, he said. "Your executive has taken a very pro-active role in investing our funds and in watching what we spend in the office. The low interest rate has reduced the returns we receive on our short term bank deposits, but 50% of our funds are invested in the stock market. We have also increased our income by renting out some of our surplus office space.

"Hopefully over the next few years we will not be faced with any more significant redundan-



General secretary Geoff Bagnall during his executive report to delegates.

cies and we can start to rebuild our union. We urgently need a period of stability so that we can plan ahead and implement those plans.

"The financial decisions we have made in the last few years are all about putting us in a strong position so that we can remain independent. What we have to do now is to decide how to go about increasing our membership, which is a crucial issue."

He said there would be as much consultation as possible with members about the union's future direction, so that the NEC's decisions would be fully informed.

Mr Bagnall ended by thanking the union's works representatives "Every day they face the inevitable problems associated with a declining industry. All of them do a tremendous job on a daily basis and we are very grateful to them."

Looks familiar!



Churchill China worker Neil Hickson was pleased to see that the St George's Hotel, Llandudno had chosen the company's ware.