

Time-dependent coal-pillar failure is a problem in several parts of the world. We should take note and act timeously. Refinements to existing procedures, like that for pillar-strength calculation, are necessary from time to time. But the real challenge lies in facing up to reality: not stating what the probability of pillar failure is, but how long a pillar can be expected to last. Surely the application of a number of minds, backed up by today's number-crunching technology and massive amounts of data, can take us a long way on this route. The question is, will we only notice the rocks in the way or will we start planning a route over this mountain?

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Wagner and Mr Ozan for starting what I hope will turn out to be scientific debate from more participants on this matter. We all owe the mining industry the positive attitude that has been shown.

## SPOTlight

### **Minerals Engineering '93 Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 25 to 27 August 1993**

by L. Lorenzen\*

For the past 12 years, the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town have hosted an annual symposium to discuss research topics in Minerals Processing. Since 1987, this meeting has been held under the auspices of the Western Cape Branch of the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, and has enjoyed much national and international support. In 1993, in place of the usual Symposium, the Branch and Universities collaborated with CSM Associates Ltd and Minerals Engineering Journal is organizing the international *Minerals Engineering '93 Conference* in Cape Town.

About 170 participants from 12 countries, attended the conference, which was held at the Cape Sun Hotel in Cape Town, the main city in the Cape Province, an area known for its beauty, friendly people, and excellent wines. The conference and associated exhibition were very well organized. The annual symposium in the Western Cape is usually a great meeting place for mineral processors from both academia and industry mainly from South Africa. This meeting was no exception, but had one major difference—it was truly an international conference, and it was good to see many new faces, particularly from America, Australia, the UK, and Canada.

About 36 papers and 35 posters were presented at the conference, a further eight papers and three posters being presented in a special symposium on the Friday, featuring environmental aspects in minerals engineering. The papers, which were overall of a very high quality, will be refereed and, if accepted, published in three special volumes of the journal *Minerals Engineering* in early 1994. Delegates received a booklet containing the abstracts of papers and posters at the conference.

The Annual Dinner of the Western Cape Branch was held at the same venue on the second evening of the conference. The guest speaker was Dr J.A. Ledger of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, who emphasized—in a manner that was both entertaining and very serious—the necessity of environmen-

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tal awareness in the minerals industry. There was general consensus from the delegates and guests that the quality and sincerity of his message was outstanding. Two SAIMM student prizes to the best final-year students in Mineral Processing were also awarded by the Past President of the Institute, Mr J.P. Hoffman, to Miss W. Kemp (University of Stellenbosch), and Mr A. Burton (University of Cape Town). A special prize to the author of the best technical paper at the INFACON Conference was also awarded to Dr R. Knutsen of the Department of Materials Engineering at the University of Cape Town.

Professor Peter King, Head of the Comminution Centre at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City in the USA, delivered the keynote address on comminution and liberation of minerals. He referred to major advances in comminution, and particularly the modelling of the liberation of minerals from refractory ores. During the morning session on the first day, various papers on comminution were presented, which included new milling technologies and the development of control systems. In the afternoon sessions the emphasis was placed on various gravity-concentration techniques. The whole of day two was used for a wide variety of topics on gold metallurgy. These included research papers featuring carbon, resin, leaching, chemical and biological methods and various other unit operations in gold metallurgy. On the last day, papers on froth flotation, magnetic separation, and modelling techniques were presented. These sections were held in parallel with the one-day Symposium on Environmental Engineering, which covered a wide variety of topics such as the recovery of metals from post-consumer wastes, the St. Lucia mining debate, the nature and stability of arsenic-bearing tailings from Biox plants, and effluent cleaning.

*Minerals Engineering '93* was a very worthwhile and well organized conference, and the proceedings will be a useful addition to the literature. Dr Barry Wills, editor of the journal *Minerals Engineering*, can be contacted at the Camborne School of Mines in Redruth, Cornwall, England, in this regard.

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