WHEN the Great Depression drove John Maynard Keynes to state the theorem now bearing his name, critics accused of him making a U-turn.

He famously rounded on them saying: "When my information changes, I alter my conclusions. What do you do, sir?" He was referring to the fact that the 1930s Depression laid bare the shortcomings of almost all economists then.

Rather than balancing the government books being the sign of a strong economy, he demonstrated that it created an underspending trap that was then consigning millions of workers unnecessarily to the scrap heap.

And it’s vital advice for anyone with any pretensions to be a serious scholar.

The world changes, and we must change our thinking as the world changes.

We must be prepared to hold the mirror up to ourselves to make sure we are still talking sense.

Now I have been a trenchant critic of the Coalition, despite (rather foolishly) having voted for one of the two parties in 2010.

Since then, I have been continually sickened by a government that seems to want to put North East society onto hunger rations while shovelling profits to their monied Home Counties friends.

So I did a double take when I heard the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement’s warm words about creating a ‘Northern Powerhouse’ spanning Manchester, Leeds and the North East.

I was naturally delighted with Newcastle University’s deserved recognition for their worldleading research on Ageing and Health that will have global impact in decades to come.

And I had to ask myself whether this was my moment when the information changed? Should we all alter our conclusions and believe that this cossetted group of overgrown public schoolboys really are the best people to lead the country after the next election? The North East still faces anti-northern chauvinism that runs through Whitehall and Westminster like words on a stick of Whitley Bay rock.

The Autumn Statement gave us a few high-profile investments like in high-technology centres for Sedgefield or dualling a few more bits of the A1. But for all the hot air blowing out of Number 11 this week, they still show in their heart that they despise us and believe that a pound spent in the North East is a pound wasted.

Newcastle has only this month sounded the alarm that this places parts of the city at risk of imminent social collapse.

The Coalition’s response: new regional talking shops where we can fight amongst ourselves over who feels the most pain, classic divide-and-rule.

Where do we build a science centre celebrating Alan Turing, the founder of modern-day computing with long-standing links to Manchester? The North East still faces anitnorthern London of course, because
why would world-class scientists want to live outside the Golden Triangle of Oxbridge and London? What to do with a publicly-owned rail line that links the North East to London, makes money for us taxpayers and has held ticket prices down? Chauvinism that runs through Whitehall and Westminster like words on a stick of rock. Why, privatise it of course, and hand over buckets of cash to our fat-cat financier chums - and no chance of high-speed rail in your lifetime, sunshine!

So has my information changed? It has, but not the way I thought.

Every week brings another example of a Coalition disaster.

The fiasco of universal credit, the collapse of university funding, the ballooning deficit, the explosion of food banks, rising prison suicides, are all accompanied by the steady drumbeat of Tory lies.

The poor deserve it, welfare is out of control, it's immigrants’ fault, and we can solve the deficit.

Since 2010, the information's definitely changed.

And, as we approach an election year, I ask you all as once did Keynes: "What will you do?"

The North East still faces antinorthern chauvinism that runs through Whitehall and Westminster like words on a stick of rock.