

HOW THE MINERS ON STRIKE HAVE BEEN MISLED...

1. ABOUT THE STRIKE.

The miners on strike are angry. And it's easy to understand why.

They are angry because of what they have been told by their leaders.

But have they been told the truth? For instance:

How many miners want this strike?

Nearly one third of the collieries have been producing coal. How many men in the striking pits actually want to go to work? Why has a national ballot been avoided?

How can miners defend their jobs by putting coal's customers out of business?

Two steel plants have stayed 100 per cent faithful to British coal; Scunthorpe and Llanwern, why should some miners put these and other steel plants at risk?

Are the striking miners killing future growth?

How will British industries turn over to coal if they are worried about being shut down? ICI were planning to convert their Wilton plant to coal — which would have meant an order of 460,000 tonnes of coal a year. Now they are having second thoughts. Yet coal

would be a much cheaper energy source for them than oil. For the same reason, during December — before the strike began — there were 78 applications from industrialists to convert to coal. Yet in the whole of April and May there were only six applications. And 22 more were withdrawn.

How long will this strike last?

On February 9, miners' leaders said that power plants had only 10 weeks stocks. In early May mineworkers were told they still had eight weeks' stocks. On June 26, it was claimed that coal shortages would cause power cuts by August. Yet the CEEGB reports that it has enough stocks to last at least until Christmas. Who — if anyone — can win a strike that lasts until Christmas?

Can the strike end the need to close uneconomic pits?

No — because it can't change a basic fact. Expensive coal is coal that can't be sold. By taking out our four million most expensive tonnes of production, we can get the average cost of our coal down — and thus make it easier to sell.

Are miners about to be thrown on the scrap heap?

Not one single compulsory redundancy has been asked for in the past three years. Or this year. About 20,000 jobs went last year — all of them on the basis of voluntary redundancy and all with very generous redundancy pay. We are sure that this year again there will be no compulsory redundancy. No one who wants to stay in the industry will be asked to leave. But if the strike continues, then up to 30 good pits could be closed forever by the lack of maintenance — and with them will go jobs that shouldn't be lost.

This strike — not the Coal Board — could butcher the industry.

That's why it is so important that this strike ends soon.

It was called by the miners' leaders. It now needs to be called off by the miners themselves.

NCB

**One in a series issued
by the National Coal Board.**

HOW THE MINERS ON STRIKE HAVE BEEN MISLED...

2. ABOUT WHAT THE STRIKE CAN ACHIEVE.

The miners on strike are angry. And it's easy to understand why.

They are angry because of what they have been told by their leaders.

But have they been told the truth?

The sad thing is that the only result the strike can achieve is irreparable damage to the industry.

Can the strike stop pit closures?

No - for a very simple reason.

The future of coal depends upon how much it costs to mine. The cheaper it is, the more of it we can sell, and therefore the more of it we can mine.

The more expensive it is, the more it will pile up unsold, like the 55 million tonnes at the beginning of this year.

No matter how long the strike continues, it cannot change this basic fact.

We need to replace four million tonnes of our most expensive coal with economically-mined output.

This will bring the average cost down - and allow us to sell more coal from our better pits.

Doing this is exactly what was agreed in the 1974 Plan for Coal - to replace old, uneconomic capacity with new economic capacity.

The final Tri-partite Report on the Plan for Coal said in Paragraph 27, "inevitably some pits will have to close as their useful economic reserves of coal are depleted".

A mere 12 per cent of our capacity is now directly costing more than £275 million a year to support. This is money that should be going into modernising our other pits - as the Plan for Coal hoped it would. That will safeguard miners' jobs, increase wages, and give Britain the coal industry it needs.

The strike cannot do that. The only thing it can achieve is the very opposite.

If it goes on long enough, the strike threatens up to 30 good pits with permanent closure.

This could not only cost miners, but also steel and railway workers jobs that should not be lost.

Can the strike win new business?

Everyone knows it can't. It is driving away future coal customers.

It is making coal more difficult to sell.

It is threatening the future of the industry.

Britain is the only country in Western Europe that is investing so heavily in the future of coal.

The British coal industry has excellent prospects.

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3. ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.

The sad thing is that this strike is totally unnecessary.

To get them out on strike, our miners have been deliberately misled by their leaders.

They have been told their industry is under threat.

That is not what the facts show.

Investment

For the last five years, the Government has been investing an average of £2 million a day in the future of the industry.

That's more than is being invested in coal by the rest of the countries in the EEC put together!

Wages

Average wage earnings for face workers will be almost £186 a week when the present offer has been accepted. That's 28 per cent higher than the average earnings in the manufacturing industry - and it will keep the miners top of the earnings league for industrial workers.

Redundancies

Over the past three years, not a single miner has been forced into redundancy who didn't want to go.

Current redundancy terms are the most generous in Western Europe. They offer lump sums of up to £35,000.

This year, 20,000 redundancies

have been asked for. There is every reason to believe that, like last year, they will all be voluntary. Not a single miner is "being thrown on the scrap-heap". Not a single miner who wants to stay in the industry is being asked to go.

Closures

The Coal Board has asked for four million tonnes of our most expensive coal - coal that no-one is buying - to be taken out of production.

This is exactly in line with the 1974 Plan for Coal, agreed between the Coal Board, the mining unions and the Government. The Final Tri-partite Report on the Plan for Coal said in paragraph 27: "inevitably some pits will have to close as their useful economic reserves of coal are depleted".

Plan for Coal also envisaged that between three and four million tonnes of capacity would be closed each year through exhaustion and exceptional mining difficulties.

Yet an average of only about half that amount has been closed since then. Just 12 per cent of our production is directly costing more than £275 million a year to support.

By closing our most expensive pits, we can get the average price of our coal down. And, by doing so, get the sales of our coal up - for the first time in many years.

This is what the Coal Board wants to do.

Heavy investment means that we are building 42 million tonnes of new capacity. Coal that can be produced at costs low enough to find customers.

How can we operate this new capacity when we still have pits working in which coal is being produced at around £90 a tonne?

How can that be justified?

Yet that is what this strike is about.

The strike is costing millions of pounds - which will push the price of coal up, making it even harder to sell.

It is frightening away new customers.

And, if it continues much longer, the strike is threatening up to 30 good pits with closure for ever.

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4. ABOUT THE PLAN FOR COAL.

Miners who are on strike are angry. And it's easy to understand why.

They are angry because of what they have been told by their leaders.

But have they been told the truth?

The sad thing is that this strike is totally unnecessary.

To get them out on strike, our miners have been deliberately misled by their leaders. Causing both bitterness and hardship among miners.

If it goes on long enough, the strike threatens up to 30 good pits with permanent closure. And it could cost not only miners, but also steel workers and railwaymen jobs that should not be lost.

It will drive away future coal customers.

It will make coal more difficult to sell.

Surely, this isn't what our miners want.

That's why, day by day, the Coal Board is publishing the facts. Facts that have been buried by the emotion, and the propaganda of the strike.

Has Plan for Coal's investment been honoured?

Time and time again, the miners' leaders have accused the Coal Board of not honouring the Plan for Coal.

The Plan for Coal, drawn up in

1974 between the NCB, the mining unions and the Government, hoped for £4.3 thousand million to be invested in the coal industry between 1974 and 1985.

So far, £6.5 thousand million has been invested. That's £2 billion, or 50 per cent more than envisaged. (All figures are expressed in today's money.)

Is Plan for Coal's production target being achieved?

Because Plan for Coal did not predict the effects of the fall in energy consumption, the forecast for coal demand in 1985 was about 20 million tonnes more than we now estimate will be used. But, in percentage terms, the Plan hoped that by 1985, coal would be providing a third of the nation's energy needs. Currently, we have a slightly better share of the market than forecast.

Is the industry being modernised - as hoped for by Plan for Coal?

Plan for Coal looked for 42 million tonnes of new capacity by 1985. All this capacity is now completed or under construction.

Plan for Coal expected that the new low-cost capacity would replace the worst, most uneconomic capacity.

Yet the miners' leaders refuse to recognise this.

The Final Tri-partite Report on the Plan for Coal said in paragraph 27:

"inevitably some pits will have to close as their useful economic reserves of coal are depleted".

The Plan for Coal envisaged that between three and four million tonnes of capacity would be closed each year. Yet the average has been only about half that amount.

Since 1974, only 80 pits have closed. Just 12 per cent of our production is now directly costing more than £275 million a year to support. This is money that should be going into modernising our better pits - as Plan for Coal intended it would.

Britain is the only country in Western Europe that is investing so heavily in the future of coal.

The British coal industry has excellent prospects.

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