

COAL INDUSTRY BILL AND MINeworkERS' PENSION SCHEME

Unfortunately, two wrong's don't make a right. It is iniquitous that of all the nationalised industries, the coal industry alone allows periods of strike to qualify for pension credit without the requirement for employees subsequently to make good their contributions.

Leaving aside the high principle of retrospection, it would seem tactically unwise to hand the Government's detractors the allegation of vindictiveness against miners at a time when the tide of events is running steadily in your favour. Attitudes are clearly ripe for change. The big prize is still a restructured coal industry established on sound commercial principles. The Luddites should be given no ammunition to hinder that process.

We would support Peter Walker in concluding that retrospective legislation is out, and that righting the wrong for the future is not an appropriate subject for a Bill to provide the finances needed by the NCB over the next two financial years. That is better left for inclusion in the general package of legislation relating to the restructuring of the coal industry. However, we suggest that the reply should make it clear that you will accept Peter Walker's proposal, provided that the NCB's EFL is tight.



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