

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.

But not if the strike continues.

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.

Ncb.

The Times (London, England), Thursday, Jul 05, 1984; pg. 9; Issue 61875. (553 words)

Category: Display Advertising

© Times Newspapers Limited

Gale Document Number:CS151228133