

HOW THE MINERS ON STRIKE HAVE BEEN MISLED...

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.

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
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