

HOW THE MINERS ON STRIKE HAVE BEEN MISLED...

ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY.

We are now starting the 18th week of a strike that everybody knows is damaging our industry.

We'd all like the strike to end. So why then is it continuing?

The simple reason is that the men who are striking are doing so because they have been led to believe that the future of their industry is at stake.

But this is not true. It cannot be true.

Coal is potentially a cheaper energy source than oil or gas. And, unlike oil and gas, it will still be around a hundred years from now.

To take advantage of this massive national asset, Britain needs a successful, profitable, and growing coal industry.

Sales of coal have been declining for many years.

But we believe in two to three years time, we can do something that hasn't happened for many years. And that is to get coal sales going up – instead of down.

It must start with reducing the average price of our coal. So that it's cheap enough to sell against the competition. To do so, we must mine more coal from low-cost mines, and less from high-cost mines.

We must stop spending hundreds of millions of pounds a year supporting mines without a future, and put that money instead into our mines that have a future.

We also need to have good men working in our best pits.

This is why it is necessary to close the worst, where we are paying around £90 a tonne to mine coal which we could have difficulty in selling at half that price.

To all the men working in those pits, we promise: **If you want to stay in the industry, you will be sure of a job.** In most cases, this will be in easy travelling distance – but if you have to move, we will pay the costs involved.

The newer mines will give a better working environment. A better chance to use skills and talents to earn more. It will also give security – because our mines have long projected lives.

That's what we are offering to men who want to stay in the industry.

To men who want to go, the Government is offering even more generous voluntary redundancy than last year.

Remember, over the past three years, not a single miner who has

wanted to stay in the industry has been made to leave.

That is why there is no reason to fear the future.

The Government is providing us with £2 million a day to invest in our industry. No other country in Western Europe is investing so heavily in the future of coal.

We all have every reason to believe in the future of our industry.

However, there is one big BUT.

If we want to sell more coal, we will need many new buyers in British industry and overseas.

But they won't switch to our coal – however good the price – unless they can be sure they can rely on our deliveries.

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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