

DEPARTMENT OF  
**ENERGY**

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**PRESS NOTICE**

Reference No 53

May 16, 1984

Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy, today urged every miner in the country to contemplate in the quiet of his own home what was on offer to him and his industry.

Mr Walker, who was speaking in London to the Coal Merchants' Federation said:

"It is a tragedy that, for over ten weeks, parts of the coal industry have been adversely affected by strike action. The coal industry stands on the brink of growth and prosperity, bringing wealth to the country and affluence to its miners. The industrial action has, above all, been a tragedy for the miners who dig this country's coal. It is to them I wish to say a few words.

"If I could have one wish today it would be that, this evening, every miner in the country could, in the peace of his own home, free of all harassment, contemplate the reality of what is on offer to him and his industry. If he did that, and weighed up the facts dispassionately, then I believe this strike would soon be over. Indeed, most would realise it should never have taken place at all.

"First, he could contemplate the fact that not one single miner who wishes to continue working as a miner will be prevented from doing so. The reduction in manpower resulting from the closure of a number of uneconomic pits will be achieved entirely from volunteers, most over the age of 50, who wish to take advantage of early retirement provisions so generous that they are the envy of every other industry in the country.

"Second, the miner tonight could consider the pay offer. He would discover that, since last November, he has had available a substantial pay increase, an increase greater than the increase for which the power workers and gas workers have already settled.

"Third, he could reflect on why there can be no truth in the propaganda that says that the Government and Mr Ian MacGregor of the Coal Board are out to butcher this country's coal industry. For the facts are there. Since 1979 this Government has broken all records for capital investment in the coal mining industry: £2 million a day has been invested in the drive to make it the most efficient and modern in the world. And there is much more to come. This Government has committed itself to a further £3 billion worth of capital investment in the coal industry. No other industry in Britain has enjoyed such a massive capital investment programme through the recession. And no other industry can look forward to such a massive capital investment programme for the years ahead. This is a strange way to butcher an industry...

"Fourth, the miner tonight should take into account my deep desire, as Secretary of State for Energy, to improve energy efficiency. I have made it clear that persuading energy users to convert to coal is a vital part of this strategy. The effort I have put in and the grants I have provided have resulted in a huge increase in applications from industry to convert to coal. If the partial strike continues, not only will this be stopped in its tracks - there will be a rush to convert to other forms of energy with more reliable supplies.

Fifth, I want every miner to be aware that, as a former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I share with Ian MacGregor the desire that Britain should become a great coal exporting nation. As the Government of France cuts its coal industry in half and West Germany reduces its coal industry too, Britain has the opportunity, if it produces coal efficiently from good pits and at a price which is competitive, to become the great coal producer of western Europe. That is why we are investing more in the British coal industry this year than will be invested throughout the whole of the rest of the European Community.

"These are the five points I ask every miner to consider in the calm of his own living room tonight. A future which means no compulsory redundancies, but a job for every miner who wants one. A pay offer more generous than most,

with much more to come as the industry becomes more efficient and profitable. A future secured by a massive investment programme designed to produce coal at a price that customers, at home and abroad, will increasingly want to buy.

"Together, they amount to my vision for British coal - an industry productive and profitable, winning new markets in the years ahead, with miners working in safe pits, using the best machinery modern technology can provide, and enjoying the highest wages and best conditions in the land.

"Too many miners have been duped into a pointless and futile strike by propaganda with a political motive. That way lies the abyss for the industry, for there can be no future down that dark road. Instead, I urge the miners to consider tonight what could be - and to build a future with dignity and prosperity for them, their families, their industry and their country."