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Extract from a speech by the Rt Hon Peter Walker MBE MP (Worcester), Secretary of State for Energy, at Cults, Aberdeen on Saturday 30th June 1984.

It is time for Britain to take stock of the impact of 16 weeks of industrial action by those sections of the National Union of Mineworkers which are on strike even though they have been denied their democratic right to a strike ballot.

The first point to note is that those miners who have balloted have been hard at work these past 16 weeks producing a considerable amount of coal and earning good money.

That in itself must suggest that the industrial action has been devoid of purpose or justification for the rest.

All agree, even the leadership of the Labour party, that the miners have been made a good pay offer.

All agree that record levels of capital investment are being pumped into the coal industry - double the investment in the coal industries in the whole of the rest of the European Community put together.

All agree, although some fail to recognise it, that the Coal Board and the Government have taken action to see that not one single miner will be made compulsorily redundant, and to provide the most generous pay-offs for those who volunteer for redundancy.

The only disagreement is the insistence by Mr Scargill that every pit, no matter how uneconomic, must be retained for eternity. That is a policy that has never been adopted in the history of the coal mining industry at home or abroad.

And it is a policy which is doing great damage, not to the Government or the Coal Board, but to every miner on strike, and to many other workers in other industries. They are the real victims of Scargill's strike.

To those miners on strike the cost of Scargill has been £350 million in lost wages. Their debts pile up, their living standards decline.

For those miners who want to see an expanding coal industry the cost of Scargill has been the loss of important export orders that could be providing jobs and opportunities for miners in Durham. Instead they are lost to the continent. In the last three months, the campaign that the Government and the Coal Board were so successfully waging to persuade industrialists to convert to coal has come to a standstill. In the same three months of last year we persuaded 169 firms to convert to coal. In the three months this year more firms have cancelled their applications than have applied for them. That is another cost of Scargill.

The Scargill strike action now threatens pits all over the country with geological faults and breakdown of equipment which may well mean pit closures in pits which would otherwise have had a good future. Another cost of Scargill. And he has prevented 20,000 miners who would like to have taken advantage of voluntary early retirement from doing so.

The toll in his own industry has been heavy, at a time when its future should be bright. Not content with that, however, Scargill, in desperation, is now trying to inflict it on other industries. The steel industry has already suffered redundancies on a scale that dwarfs the small number of closures of uneconomic pits that is envisaged by the Coal Board. The steel industry is just beginning to gain back markets, to build a healthy order book and to look to expansion instead of contraction. But if Scargill succeeds in closing Llanwern and Ravenscraig he will lose the jobs of thousands of steelworkers. They will lose orders for the British Steel industry from home and abroad and they will lose one of their best customers. That is the cost of Scargill to the steel industry.

Surely soon sanity must prevail and the miners must demand that their leaders sit down with the Coal Board and agree, as they can agree, a plan for coal that will give Britain the most successful coal industry in Europe and secure for miners a prosperous future. If miners leaders take that as their objective agreement could be reached within days, and the damage to jobs and to miners' families could cease.

END.