

CHAIRMAN  
Ian MacGregor

June, 1984

Dear Colleague,

YOUR FUTURE IN DANGER

I am taking the unusual step of writing to you at home because I want every man and woman who has a stake in the coal industry to realise clearly the damage which will be done if this disastrous strike goes on a long time.

The leaders of the NUM have talked of it continuing into the winter. Now that our talks with them have broken down this is a real possibility. It could go on until December or even longer. In which case the consequences for everybody will be very grave.

Your President talks continually of keeping the strike going indefinitely until he achieves "victory".

I would like to tell you, not provocatively or as a threat, why that will not happen however long the strike lasts.

What this strike is really about is that the NUM leadership is preventing the development of an efficient industry. We have repeatedly explained that we are seeking to create a higher volume, lower cost industry which will be profitable, well able to provide superior levels of earnings while still being able to compete with foreign coal. To achieve this, huge sums of money are being invested in new equipment; last year it was close to £800 million and we expect to continue a similarly high rate of investment in the years ahead. Our proposals mean, short term, cutting out some of the uneconomic pits and looking for about 20,000 voluntary redundancies - the same as last year. The redundancy payments are now more generous than ever before for those who decide not to take alternative jobs offered in the industry.

However long the strike goes on I can assure you that we will end up, through our normal consultative procedures, with about the same production plans as those we discussed with your representatives on 6th March last.

But the second reason why continuing the strike will not bring the NUM "victory" is this: in the end nobody will win. Everybody will lose - and lose disastrously.

Many of you have already lost more than £2,000 in earnings and have seen your savings disappear. If the strike goes on until December it will take many of you years to recover financially and also more jobs may be lost - and all for nothing.

I have been accused of planning to butcher the industry. I have no such intention or desire. I want to build up the industry into one we can all be proud to be part of.

But if we cannot return to reality and get back to work then the industry may well be butchered. But the butchers will not be the Coal Board.

You are all aware that mines which are not constantly maintained and worked deteriorate in terms of safety and workability.

AT THE PRESENT TIME THERE ARE BETWEEN 20 and 30 pits which are viable WHICH WILL BE IN DANGER OF NEVER RE-OPENING IF WE HAVE A LENGTHY STRIKE.

This is a strike which should never have happened. It is based on very serious misrepresentation and distortion of the facts. At great financial cost miners have supported the strike for fourteen weeks because your leaders have told you this .....

That the Coal Board is out to butcher the coal industry.

That we plan to do away with 70,000 jobs.

That we plan to close down around 86 pits, leaving only 100 working collieries.

IF THESE THINGS WERE TRUE I WOULD NOT BLAME MINERS FOR GETTING ANGRY OR FOR BEING DEEPLY WORRIED. BUT THESE THINGS ARE ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE. I STATE THAT CATEGORICALLY AND SOLEMNLY. YOU HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY MISLED.

The NUM, which called the strike, will end it only when you decide it should be ended.

I would like you to consider carefully, so we can get away from the tragic violence and pressures of the mass pickets, whether this strike is really in your interest.

I ask you to join your associates who have already returned to work so that we can start repairing the damage and building up a good future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ian MacLennan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom left of the page.