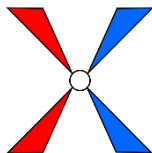


586 FB

bncdoc.id	HHW
bncdoc.year	1992
bncdoc.title	[Hansard extracts 1991-1992]
bncdoc.info	[Hansard extracts 1991-1992]. Sample containing about 292389 words of miscellanea (domain: world affairs)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written miscellaneous
David Lee's classification	W_hansard

<586/c>	had turned up, the Bill would not have become an Act. Mr. Stewart My hon. Friend is correct. All Nottinghamshire Conservative Members were present at that debate, and they voted against the Bill. If the Labour party had put its money where its mouth was and voted with us, the problem facing us today would not have arisen. As I said, at that time the motives of Labour Members were questioned, and the questions remained unanswered. Now all is revealed through Labour's policy decision to ban opencast mines . The implication of that for Nottinghamshire's deep mines is catastrophic . Thousands of jobs will be lost . Thirteen of the 14 Nottinghamshire collieries require low-chlorine coal from opencast sites to sweeten their product, on a ratio of 6 tonnes deep mined to 1 tonne open cast, before it is accepted by the power generating companies. The loss of that low-chlorine coal by itself is disastrous , but the loss of the £200 million annual profit from British Coal's opencast division, which is used to subsidise deep-mined coal, would increase prices by almost £5 a tonne, leaving British Coal with no market or jobs for its miners . That bombshell , coming from the Labour party at a time when Nottinghamshire miners are continually breaking production records, shows Labour's lack of faith in and support for the coal industry , and why Nottinghamshire miners abandoned socialism in 1985. Notwithstanding that threat , I am confident in backing our miners, because only they can offer the generators long-term contracts which guarantee falling prices, paid for in sterling and free from exchange rate fluctuations. It is an offer that no other coal supplier at home or abroad can make. One may well ask why, with such a generous offer, the chief executives of our generating companies are not queuing up at British Coal's door. For a start, they are inexperienced in the commercial world, having spent their earlier years in the cosy surrounds of a nationalised concern. Since privatisation, they have yet to make a major decision. Remember, the present coal contracts were fixed for them by my right hon. Friend. With such complacency, it would be an abrogation of our duty to allow two commercial companies to ruin a major industry and its jobs and to wipe out a multi-billion pound investment made on behalf of taxpayers. Therefore, the time has come for my right hon. Friend to exercise our 40 per cent. shareholding in National Power and PowerGen and instruct the chief executives to sit down with British Coal and negotiate a mutually beneficial contract from 1993. What I have advocated is possible and not just a dream , but it would be remiss of me not to consider
	
<p>Key:</p> <p>Footprint</p> <p>ConEn1</p> <p>Footprint</p> <p>ConEn2</p> <p>Footprint</p> <p>ConEn3</p>	
	<p>the nightmare scenario of colliery closures</p> <p>at a time when we are increasing restructuring grants by £1,000 million. The death of a pit is the end of an era, in some cases lasting more than 100 years. Gedling colliery in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) closed a week ago after a four-year battle by the miners to make it successful. Nobody, not even the Labour party, could change the geological</p>

	<p>conditions. On behalf of the 400 men from Sherwood who work at Gedling, I thank my hon. Friend for his endless time and effort, not only during the past few weeks but over years, to keep that colliery open. He was such a regular visitor that he was given his own pit boots and locker. However, we must ensure that there is life after death by creating new workplaces on the former colliery sites. The target number of jobs should equal those lost from the indigenous mining communities. A prime example of that can be seen at Blidworth in my constituency. Within hours of the colliery closing, Newark and Sherwood district council started work, in conjunction with other agencies, on a rebuilding programme. Two years later, the new developments are on stream, bringing the target of 400 job opportunities even closer. The only criticism is the time taken to put the financial package together before work could begin. Grant applications have to be made to the EC, the Rural Development Commission and the Department of the Environment, with approvals taking months at a time when speed is of the essence. A simple change of policy, making British Coal Enterprise Ltd. responsible, would be a first step. It has a proven track record, creating 71,000 new job opportunities since it was formed seven years ago. A closure dowry based on a ratio of £X million for every 100 jobs lost would enable BCE to take control on day one, working in partnership with local authorities and matching pound for pound any EC contribution. By doing that, we would eliminate the 12-month delay. Time wasted cannot be recovered, so it is crucial that we have a system designed and ready to implement the moment that any colliery closes. Britain has commercial coal reserves at today's extraction rates to last more than 200 years, whether in clean coal power generation, gasification, liquefaction or chemical derivatives. It is one of our most valuable assets, like the land that produces our food. No one in his right mind would ever suggest that our farmers become nothing but park keepers as a result of surplus food in the world. Agriculture is part of the common agricultural policy and I urge my right hon. Friend to see</p>
--	--