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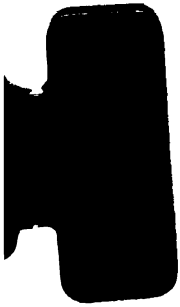
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DOCUMENTS



**HISTORY OF
THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

UNITED KINGDOM CIVIL SERIES

Edited by SIR KEITH HANCOCK

**The authors of the Civil Histories have been given
full access to official documents. They and the editors
are alone responsible for the statements made
and the views expressed**

MANPOWER

A Study of War-time Policy and Administration

BY

H. M. D. PARKER

*Sometime Fellow of Magdalen College
Oxford*



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CONTENTS

DOCUMENTS
DEPT.

	<i>Page</i>
PREFACE.	xvii

PART I

CHAPTER I: MANPOWER PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR	1
i. Recruiting for the Armed Forces	2
ii. Civilian Manpower	6
Wages	7
Dilution	11
Transfer of Workers	13
iii. The State Machine	14
 CHAPTER II: THE EMPLOYMENT POSITION BETWEEN THE TWO WARS	
i. The Industrial Population	18
ii. Unemployment	22
iii. Employment and Training	26
iv. The Relationship of Employers and Workers	31
v. Summary	36
 CHAPTER III: PLANNING FOR THE NEXT WAR	38
i. Manpower Planning down to 1938	40
ii. Munich to the Outbreak of War	51
 CHAPTER IV: THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF WAR	61
i. Labour Supply	65
The Shortage of Skilled Workers	66
The Movement of Labour	72
ii. Wage Controls	78
iii. Proposed Change of Policy	85
 CHAPTER V: MR. BEVIN AT THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR	87

CHAPTER VI: PROGRAMMES AND REQUIREMENTS (MAY 1940-DECEMBER 1941)	
The Priority System	97
The Allocation System	99
The Manpower Requirements Committee	101
Ceiling for Army Intake	105
Heads of Labour Policy.	107
i. Manpower Survey (Autumn 1941)	109
ii. Changes in Manpower Distribution (1939-1941)	115
 CHAPTER VII: THE APPLICATION OF CONTROLS TO CIVILIAN MANPOWER-1940	
i. Internal Organisation	119
ii. Problems of Labour Supply	122
The Engineering Industry	122
The Building Industry	126
Other Important Industries	128
Less Important Industries	130
Unemployment	132
iii. Industrial Relations	133
 CHAPTER VIII: THE APPLICATION OF CONTROLS TO CIVILIAN MANPOWER-1941	
i. The Essential Work Order	137
ii. Registrations	143
iii. Protected Work	145
iv. Concentration of Industry	146
 CHAPTER IX: THE CALL-UP IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF WAR	
i. Call-up Procedure	150
ii. Statutory Rights under the National Service Act	154
(a) Conscientious Objections.	155
(b) Hardship	157
iii. Reservation and Deferment	158
iv. Changes in Policy and Procedure	160
<i>Appendix I</i>	164

CONTENTS

vii

CHAPTER X: THE MANPOWER OUTLOOK IN 1942	166
Spring Survey of the Ministry of Labour	169
A Ministry of Production	170
Additional Demands of the Services	172
The Bomber Programme	174
Autumn Survey of the Ministry of Labour	175
CHAPTER XI: THE MOVEMENT OF LABOUR IN 1942	180
i. Labour Problems of Particular Industries	181
(a) Engineering and Shipbuilding	181
(b) The Essential Industries	185
(c) The Less Essential Industries	187
ii. More Concentration	190
(a) The Clothing Industry	190
(b) Other Board of Trade Industries	191
(c) The Food Industries	192
Summary	193
iii. Civil Defence	195
iv. The Manpower Situation at Mid-Summer 1942	197
CHAPTER XII: THE PEAK OF MOBILISATION	200
May Survey of the Ministry of Labour	202
Revised Allocations of Manpower	204
Labour Priority for M.A.P.	206
The Manpower Situation in Autumn 1943	210
CHAPTER XIII: THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINE IN OPERATION	
i. Ministerial Machinery	212
ii. The Ministry of Labour	214
iii. Consultative Machinery	219
iv. Instruments of Control	222
(a) Registrations	223
(b) Directions	223
(c) The Essential Work Order	224
CHAPTER XIV: MANPOWER PLANNING IN THE LAST PHASES OF THE WAR	226
i. Manpower Allocations—Stage I	229
ii. Manpower Allocations—Stage II	233
iii. The Final Manpower Budget of the War	236

CHAPTER XV: LABOUR SUPPLY PROBLEMS, SEPTEMBER 1943—MAY 1945	
i. Manpower for D-Day	242
(a) Mulberry	242
(b) Transport, etc.	245
ii. Flying Bombs and Rockets (V.1. and V.2.)	248
iii. Coal-mining—the Ballot Scheme	252
 CHAPTER XVI: RECONSTRUCTION PLANS AND RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES	
i. Reconstruction Plans	257
(a) White Paper on Employment Policy	257
(b) Scheme for Releases from the Forces.	258
(c) Scheme for the Redistribution of Civilian Manpower	261
ii. Resettlement Schemes	263
(a) The Further Education and Training Scheme	264
(b) Training for Business	265
(c) Vocational Training	265
(d) Interrupted Apprenticeship Scheme	266
iii. Resettlement of the Disabled	267
iv. Advice on Resettlement	270
<i>Appendix II.</i>	273

PART II

CHAPTER XVII: THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE WAR EFFORT	
i. The Growing Demands for Women Workers	281
The Registration for Employment Order, March 1941	284
The National Service (No. 2) Act, December 1941	286
The Control of Engagement Order, January 1942	287
ii. The Problem of Mobility	288
iii. The Ministry of Labour Machine	292

CHAPTER XVIII: DEFERMENT AND THE DISTRICT MANPOWER BOARDS	299
i. The District Manpower Offices	300
(a) Constitution, Staffing and Siting	300
(b) Procedure	303
(c) Expansion of Functions	306
ii. Special Deferment Schemes	310
<i>Appendix III</i>	315
CHAPTER XIX: PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC MANPOWER	318
i. The Central Register	319
ii. The Appointments Offices	322
iii. Measures for Increasing the Supply of Scientists and Technicians	325
(a) State Bursaries	328
(b) Training Scheme for the Higher National Certificate	329
(c) Engineering Cadetships	329
<i>Appendix IV</i>	331
CHAPTER XX: EXTRANEOUS SOURCES OF MANPOWER	
i. Irish Labour	334
ii. British and Colonial Labour from Overseas	342
iii. Friendly Aliens and Allied Nationals	344
iv. Prisoners of War	347
CHAPTER XXI: EMPLOYMENT FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	
i. The Juvenile Employment Service	349
ii. War-Time Policy	352
iii. The War-Time Distribution of Juveniles in Employ- ment	354
iv. Special Problems	358
(a) Coal-mining	358
(b) Building	361
v. Plans for Post-War Industrial Training	366
vi. The Committee on the Juvenile Employment Service	367
CHAPTER XXII: TRAINING OF WORKERS	372
i. Basic Training at G.T.C.s	373
ii. Specialised Training	382
iii. Summary	389

CHAPTER XXIII: THE WELFARE OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKER		392
i.	Outside the Factory	396
(a)	Transfer and Reception	396
(b)	Lodgings	397
(c)	Residential Hostels	399
(d)	Transport for Workers	403
(e)	Recreation	406
ii.	Inside the Factory	411
(a)	Factory and Medical Services	412
(b)	Industrial Canteens	416
(c)	Personnel Management	419
iii.	Special Schemes	421
(a)	Docks Canteens	421
(b)	Seamen's Welfare	422
 CHAPTER XXIV: WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT		
i.	Wages	424
Mr. Bevin's Attitude to Control of Wages.	. . . . .	425
Order 1305 . . . . .	. . . . .	426
Stabilisation of Prices . . . . .	. . . . .	428
Wage Increases . . . . .	. . . . .	429
Review of Wages and Earnings . . . . .	. . . . .	433
ii.	Trade Boards and Wages Councils	437
iii.	Conditions of Employment	440
(a)	Hours of Work	441
(b)	Holidays	445
Appendix V . . . . .	. . . . .	448
 CHAPTER XXV: INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES		
i.	Order 1305 and its Efficacy	455
ii.	General Reasons for Industrial Unrest	457
iii.	Particular Examples of Industrial Stoppages	459
(a)	Strike of Apprentices, 1941	459
(b)	Betteshanger, 1942	460
(c)	Strike of Boilermakers, 1944	462
(d)	Strike against the Coal-mining Ballot Scheme, 1944	465
iv.	Prosecutions under Order 1305	466
 CHAPTER XXVI: THE ACHIEVEMENT IN RETROSPECT		472
 STATISTICAL APPENDIX		479
 INDEX		507

APPENDICES

	<i>Page</i>
I. Procedure for supplying Personnel for Civil Defence and the Home Guard.	164
II. Scheme for Releases from the Services	273
III. Special Deferment Schemes	315
IV. Review of Pre-War Discussions about Professional and Scientific Manpower	331
V. The Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, 1940	448

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

TABLE I.	Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain at June each year 1939 to 1945	481
TABLE II.	Changes in Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain between June 1939 and June 1945.	483
TABLE III.	Strength of the Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services of the United Kingdom	484
TABLE IV.	Intake and Outflow of the Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services	485
TABLE V.	Casualties suffered during the War by the Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services	487
TABLE VI.	Registrations of Men under the Military Training Act, 1939 and the National Service (Armed Forces) Acts, 1939-1942	488
TABLE VII.	Registrations of Women under the Registration for Employment Order, 1941	491
TABLE VIII.	Results of Medical Examinations of Men and Women by Medical Boards appointed under the Military Training Act, 1939 and the National Service Acts, 1939-1942	493
TABLE IX.	Number of Applications for Deferment dealt with each month by the District Manpower Boards	497
TABLE X.	Estimated Numbers of Persons Insured under the Unemployment Insurance Acts at July, 1939, 1943 and 1945 by Regions	498

	<i>Page</i>
TABLE XI. Essential Work Orders—(A) Approximate Numbers of Undertakings scheduled and of Workers covered; (B) Numbers of Applications to National Service Officers for Permission to leave, discharge or transfer; Appeals from National Service Officers' Decisions and Applications granted . . .	499
TABLE XII. Working Class Cost of Living Index—(A) Annual averages; (B) Monthly movements	500
TABLE XIII. Index of Weekly Wage Rates, 1938–1945	502
TABLE XIV. Changes in Average Earnings in the years 1938–1945	503
TABLE XV. Industrial Disputes—(A) Number of disputes and workpeople involved; (B) Working days lost as a result of disputes	504

TEXT TABLES

1. Strength of the British Army, August 1914–November 1918	6
2. British Army Battle Casualties, 1914–1918	6
3. Industrial Stoppages, 1913–1918	9
4. Employment in the United Kingdom in November 1918 as compared with July 1914	16
5. Estimated numbers insured under the Unemployment Insurance Scheme in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, July 1923, 1929, 1932 and 1937	19
6. Estimated numbers insured in Great Britain, July 1923, 1929, 1932 and 1937, by Administrative Divisions	20
7. General unemployment rate, 1921–1938	23
8. Examples of industries with low and high rates of unemployment, 1924, 1929, 1932 and 1937	23
9. Unemployment rates by divisions, 1929–1937	24
10. Duration of unemployment, September 1929, August 1932, 1936 and 1939	25
11. Numbers employed in the Engineering, Motor and Aircraft Group, June 1939 and April 1940	77
12. Requirements of the Forces and A.R.P., 1939–1941	102
13. Requirements of the Munitions Industries, 1939–1941	102

CONTENTS

xiii

	<i>Page</i>
14. Service demands and industrial demands for labour, 12 months ending June 1942	110
15. Estimated division of manpower between Government, Export and Home Uses, July 1941	112
16. Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain, 1939, 1940 and 1941	114
17. Manpower Requirements, 1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943	177
18. Manpower Allocations, 1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943	179
19. Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain, 1939-1942.	199
20. Manpower Allocations in the munitions industries, 1943	200
21. Intake into the Forces, July 1942 to March 1943.	202
22. Increases in Industry, July 1942 to March 1943	202
23. Total Achievement, July 1942 to March 1943	203
24. Allocations of Manpower, April to December 1943	206
25. Allocations and Achievements, 1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943	209
26. Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain, 1939-1943	210
27. Directions issued, 1940-1945	224
28. Allocations of Manpower, 1944	232
29. Allocations and Achievements, 1944	234
30. Estimated numbers of insured persons aged 14-17 engaged in certain industries, 1938-1945	371
31. Engineering training courses completed, 1941-1944	382
32. Numbers of fit men and women who received full-time training between September 1939 and June 1945	391
33. Changes in Prices and Wages: Index figures 1938-1945.	433
34. Changes in average weekly earnings, 1938-1945.	436

EDITORS' NOTE

Two books on Manpower are published simultaneously. The first book, by Mr. Parker, deals with the total resources of manpower in the United Kingdom and their use ; these were the responsibility under War Cabinet direction of the Ministry of Labour and National Service. The second book, by Mrs. Inman, deals with manpower as a factor of production within the industries controlled by the Supply Ministries. Each subject seemed sufficiently large and complicated to demand a book to itself, but although some overlap is inevitable the two volumes have been designed to complement each other.

W. K. HANCOCK

M. M. POSTAN

PREFACE

THE PURPOSE of this book is to give an account of the mobilisation of the civilian population of this country in the Second World War and of the ways in which men and women were allocated between the Fighting Services, Civil Defence and industry. It describes the factors which determined decisions of policy and the steps by which the technique of manpower budgeting was learned and developed. It gives an account of the measures of gradually increasing severity by which policy was put into operation and of the machinery by which the Ministry of Labour, which was the responsible department, called up men and women for the Services, registered others for civilian employment and attempted from the numbers available to meet the more urgent demands of the war production programme and of essential industries and services. In dealing with the methods by which labour for the civilian front was allocated among the competing claimants, my aim has been to set out the estimated requirements of the different supply departments, the available number of workers to fill the vacancies, and the steps which had to be taken to effect a balance between demand and supply. More detailed appraisements of the manpower problems of particular industries will be found in other volumes of this series, and notably in Mrs. P. Inman's companion study 'Labour in the Munitions Industries'.

The book is divided into two Parts. The first has three introductory chapters, the first of which describes in broad outline how the more important aspects of manpower policy—call-up, distribution of civilian workers and labour relations—were handled in the First World War. The second gives a picture of the salient features of the employment situation in the intervening years of peace, and in the third there is an account of the plans that were drawn up against the possibility of a Second World War. This background information is essential to an understanding of the difficulties with which manpower planners were faced in the autumn of 1939. After a chapter on what has been called the phoney war the remainder of Part I is devoted to a chronological account, beginning with the appointment of Mr. Bevin as Minister of Labour, of the problems that arose with increasing complexity and urgency as the war went on, and of the ways in which they were handled. Some chapters, as their titles show, accordingly concentrate upon questions of policy and between them are chapters which describe how the decisions were put into practice. Part I concludes with an account of the demobilisation plans and resettlement schemes.

Part II consists of a number of self-contained chapters. Each of them is devoted to an account of an aspect of manpower which, because of its intrinsic interest or its specialised character, called for more detailed treatment than would have been appropriate in Part I of this book.

When I was invited in the summer of 1953 to write this book I inherited a number of studies of particular branches of the subject which had been produced by a team of researchers under the direction of Professor A. V. Judges. I derived much benefit from these surveys and the accuracy of their annotations made my own examination of the original documents a lighter task than it would otherwise have been. I wish especially to express my appreciation of the work done by Miss M. E. Rayner and Mr. A. J. Corfield, and my great debt to Professor Judges's study of the Allocation of Manpower which is the foundation upon which my account of manpower budgeting has been mainly constructed. In the preliminary stages before I began to write I had the advantage of being able to talk to present and past officials of the Ministry of Labour who were good enough to open their memories to me. I am particularly grateful to Mr. W. Taylor who read a number of my chapters in draft and gave me much valuable advice and to Sir Godfrey Ince, until recently Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, who not only provided me with a wealth of information, but read and criticised my completed manuscript. I should also like to thank Miss E. C. Bailey of the Ministry of Labour, who has been my sole assistant, for all the help she has given me. She has taken infinite trouble in verifying my references and the assembling of the statistical tables in the book is largely her own unaided work. If, as I hope, the text is comparatively free from mistakes that is the fruit of her vigilance. The final proofs were read by my friend Mr. R. H. Dundas of Christ Church, Oxford, and I am most grateful to him for undertaking this onerous task.

H.M.D.P.

PART I

CHAPTER I

MANPOWER PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE CENTURY that followed the battle of Waterloo was for Britain an age of peace. The wars in which she was involved were limited in compass and generally of short duration. In none of them were the casualties or the expenditure on war materials comparable to what she had incurred in the long years of fighting with France. In the conduct of these operations and for the defence of her Empire she relied on a strong Navy and a relatively small regular Army supplemented, as in the South African war, by a volunteer militia, which in the early twentieth century was succeeded by the Territorial Army. Conscription had neither been favoured nor found necessary. A great access of material prosperity had further encouraged a belief in continuing security and invulnerability. Even if trouble with Germany were to arise, it was generally assumed that victory would not be long delayed. In this easy confidence the possibility of a protracted war on a massive scale was seldom entertained and the burdens that it would involve were consistently left unexamined. Thus when war was declared on 4th August 1914 there were few who envisaged the long and costly struggle that lay ahead. The commonly held opinion was that the British Navy would keep the seas open and that the armies of France supported by the British Expeditionary Force would in a matter of months throw back and defeat the Germans.

With no prepared plans or arrangements for even a partial mobilisation of the manpower of the country, the Government had recourse to improvisations and experiments. The immediate success that crowned the appeal for recruits for the Army seemed to justify the policy; but before the first winter of the war was half over the dangerous consequences of uncontrolled volunteering had become only too apparent. The munitions industries had lost many of their skilled and experienced workers and the output of equipment and weapons was already lagging behind the requirements of the Expeditionary Force and the newly formed contingents at home. The Government was thus faced with the necessity of adjusting the ever increasing demands of the Forces and industry for manpower and of trying to devise means for satisfying the assessed requirements. It was, however, comparatively late in the war before the measures that events were virtually dictating

were adopted. In 1916 conscription was introduced, and a year later the supply and distribution of civilian manpower were made the responsibility—albeit without compulsory powers—of a single Department of State, the newly established Ministry of National Service. Behind these decisions lay a story of trial and error, which it is pertinent to tell in broad outline. For without a background knowledge of how manpower problems were handled in the First World War we shall not be able to judge how far the planners in the Second World War profited by the experience of their predecessors—by their successes no less than by their failures.

(i)

Recruiting for the Armed Forces

The first measure to check the indiscriminate enlistments, which were the fruit of the appeal for the first 100,000 volunteers, was a scheme of war service badges. It began early in 1915 on an experimental basis when the Admiralty, and a little later the War Office, were authorised to issue badges to workers indispensable for the manufacture of the arms and equipment they required. The types of workers intended to be covered differed. The Admiralty's policy was that badges could be issued to any worker employed on any stage of the manufacture of munitions for the Navy: the War Office, on the other hand, limited the field to technical workers in its Ordnance factories and in the chief armament firms. In either case the identification of the recipients was left to the employer. By mid-summer the Admiralty had issued 400,000 badges, while the War Office, which was at least attempting to plan its scheme on an occupational basis, had limited the number to 80,000.

This irregular and confused system came to an end in July when the newly formed Ministry of Munitions became the one statutory badging authority. Its activities were confined to the munitions trades, and within this field it aimed at protecting essential workers at every stage of production. The task was formidable and the timing unpropitious for success. There was little reliable information about the distribution of manpower or the demarcation of skills. A national register based on the Census had not as yet been compiled, and a committee charged with the task of drawing up a list of reserved occupations only began its work three months later. The Ministry had, therefore, to make its own list of firms and rely on the information employers furnished in approving the number of workers to whom it was proposed to issue badges. Such a procedure was clearly open to abuse and, as the Ministry itself was an interested party, the scales were weighted against the Army.

By the end of the year the situation was critical. The weekly intake to the Army was 30 per cent. below the estimated requirements, and volunteering was seriously depleting the manpower of vital industries and services to which the badging system did not apply. For the 1916 campaign no fewer than 1½ million more men, it was calculated, were wanted. Compulsion seemed the inevitable answer, but before making such a radical change of policy the Government decided to consult the trade unions. Labour leaders were not opposed to conscription if it was proved that it was necessary, but they were not prepared to see the fate of the worker dependent upon the whim of his employer. What they particularly resented was the section of the Munitions of War Act that prevented a munitions worker who left or lost his employment from obtaining within six weeks another job, unless his previous employer had given him a Leaving Certificate that he had gone with his consent. Under a compulsory call-up system, it was argued, this was tantamount to giving an employer power to send a man into the Army. In face of these strongly held opinions the Government decided to give voluntaryism one further chance, and Lord Derby was commissioned to launch a great recruiting campaign.

The chief difficulty was going to be the selection of the volunteers and steps were taken to avoid a repetition of earlier mistakes. The National Register, which provided information about the numbers employed in different trades and professions, was now available, and labour exchanges were instructed to star the cards of men of military age who were employed in industries and services vital to the home and export market. Men so starred and holders of war service badges, if they volunteered, were to be attested but not enlisted. Apart from this double system of exemption all other volunteers were to be enrolled, single and married men separately. Finally, provision was made for hearing appeals by the setting up of Appeals Tribunals throughout the country.

The campaign was conducted with vigour and enthusiasm and the response was encouraging. When, however, the agreed tests of eligibility had been applied and the medically unfit rejected it was estimated that approximately only 800,000 of the volunteers were available for service in the field, of whom a majority were married men. This fell far short of the required total and over a million single men of military age had not responded to the appeal. These facts spelled the doom of the voluntary system.

In January 1916 the first National Service Act was placed on the Statute Book. In general it repeated the principles upon which the Derby Scheme had been based. Single men were to be enrolled before the married. The system of badges, which were now converted into certificates of exemption, was continued, power being given to Government departments to issue them to men engaged on work of

national importance. The Appeals Tribunals were replaced by Military Service Tribunals to deal with complaints in cases where men had not been granted exemption.

The trade union leaders agreed readily enough that the case for the introduction of compulsory service had now been established, but they remained apprehensive of the powers that employers retained over the workers. These fears were partly allayed by modifications made during the passage of the National Service Bill through Parliament in some of the more obnoxious provisions in the Munitions of War Act dealing with 'leaving certificates,' but during the subsequent months Labour remained highly critical of the ways in which exemption certificates were granted. Nor were their allegations ungrounded. Sample returns from badged firms showed that far too many exemptions were being granted and that in many instances the recipients could not be classified as skilled men. The pendulum had swung too far and it was no longer the recruiting authorities, but the Ministry of Munitions, against whom protection was needed. When, however, a proposal was made to debadge and decertify all men under twenty-six, Labour protested and a strike began at Sheffield. Under this cloud the Government met the trade union leaders in the hope of discovering some means of finding men for the Army without disrupting the country's will to fight. The result was the Trade Card Agreement, which in effect gave the trade unions authority to decide whether a skilled man should be retained in civil employment or taken for the Army. This was a desperate decision. The Government was thereby abrogating its responsibilities and the trade union leaders were being placed in the impossible position of having to decide about the lives of the men who had appointed them to protect their interests. The strike was settled, but the scheme in a few months ended in inevitable failure.

Perhaps the chief reason why the different attempts to reach an effective exemption policy had failed was that the problem was approached from the wrong end. It had been treated as a subject for which general rules could be prescribed and operated by a central authority. But the question whether a man should or should not go into the Army is individual and can only be properly answered by people who, in the light of the broad rules laid down centrally, can estimate from their local knowledge the importance of the work upon which he is employed and judge the claim that he is indispensable to it. In other words a national scheme, however soundly conceived, cannot hope to succeed unless its execution is delegated to efficient local organisations.

The heavy casualties on the Somme and the failure of the Trade Card Agreement had once again created an acute shortage of recruits. The Government turned to the Ministry of Munitions and a new scheme was produced. This was a notable advance on all previous efforts. Based on the Schedule of Protected Occupations, which had

now been compiled out of the accumulated experience of the different Ministries, it provided varying degrees of protection for skilled workers according to their occupations, age and medical category. To give the system the required flexibility, the old statutory certificates of exemption were replaced by certificates which could be withdrawn by administrative action without any prescribed period of grace. For their distribution Munitions Area Recruiting officers were appointed throughout the country; medical examinations were instituted to avoid wasteful decertification, and committees consisting of representatives of supply departments and trade unions were set up to investigate and hear complaints. The plan was by no means perfect, but it was a plan. Its two great merits were that it was based upon the Schedule of Protected Occupations and that it provided local machinery, however cumbersome, for its execution.

The last chapter in this story opens with the establishment in August 1917 of the Ministry of National Service. For the next months the new Minister, who had taken the Committee on Reserved Occupations into his department, anxiously watched the recruiting situation and towards the end of the year he reported to the Government that under the current system of exemptions the Army would not get the numbers it wanted. Instead he proposed that in all occupations men below a prescribed age should be made available for the Forces and their certificates of exemption should be withdrawn, with the proviso that only men fully fit for military service should be decertified. The Government was at first reluctant to agree to this revolutionary change, which came to be known as 'the clean cut', for fear of industrial disturbances. But by the end of the year facts forced its hand and the Minister was instructed to test the reactions of Labour. Negotiations, perhaps the hardest of any in the war, were opened and brought to a successful conclusion. In February 1918 the Military Service Act was passed and gave power to make the necessary withdrawal orders. The change was not affected without labour troubles in Coventry, but the German offensive of March was a conclusive argument of its justification—so much so that the Government was able to pass in April a further Act raising the age limit of compulsory service to fifty-one.

Between August 1917 and the end of the war 70,000 men were posted to the Army although manpower was fully stretched and the output of munitions and the production of food had reached their highest levels of the war.

Table 1 shows year by year the rising strength of the Army despite the enormous wastage through battle casualties which is shown in total in Table 2.¹

¹ For comparison with strength and wastage in the Second World War see Statistical Appendix, Tables III and V.

*Table 1: Strength of the British Army
August 1914–November 1918¹*

1914	August	499,100
	December	1,684,700
1915	„	2,640,800
1916	„	3,397,100
1917	„	3,773,100
1918	November	3,759,500

*Table 2: British Army Battle Casualties
1914–1918*

Killed (including Died of Wounds)	704,800
Wounded	1,665,000
Prisoners of War and Missing	157,000
Total	<u>2,526,800</u>

(ii)

Civilian Manpower

In the early days of the war the primary concern of the Government was the immediate raising of new armies, and the question whether arms and equipment could be provided in the volume and at the rate they would be required received little constructive attention. The severe fighting during the first winter created a serious shortage of guns and shells, but it was not till June 1915 that a Ministry of Munitions was set up. The call to the engineering industry to concentrate its full efforts on the production of war materials brought to light the inadequacy of the existing labour force. There was in particular a shortage of skilled workers, whose numbers had been reduced by voluntary enlistment, and there was neither the time nor the opportunity to make good the deficiency by the normal method of apprenticeship training. Moreover, where skill was scarce, competition to obtain it was bound to be keen and employers might be expected to poach on each other's preserves by holding out the bait of higher wages and earnings. There were two ways in which these problems would have to be tackled. First, the restless movement of skilled workers must be stopped and, in the absence of any imposed control on the freedom of workers to change their employment, the best means of attempting this would be by the standardisation of wages for skilled jobs. But however successfully this re-deployment might be effected, the supply would still be inadequate and, as the demand for munitions mounted, the deficiency would be accentuated. It would, therefore, be necessary

¹ *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, the War Office March 1922. Published by H.M. Stationery Office.

to consider the practicability of training semi-skilled men and women to do under supervision some of the jobs upon which traditionally only skilled men were employed. Progress on these lines was dependent upon the co-operation of both sides of industry and, before dilution could be introduced, it would be necessary for the unions to agree to the modification of some of their restrictive practices. Transcending these particular issues was the need to restrain demands for higher wages—with the twofold object of checking inflation and of maintaining industrial peace, without which full production would be unobtainable. For the execution of its policy the Government would thus be obliged—contrary to its peace-time practice—to enlist the co-operation of industry and to negotiate with the trade unions, which in the course of the war increased their membership and thereby strengthened their bargaining powers in the field of industrial diplomacy.

WAGES

In the pre-war years there was no uniformity in the methods by which wages were determined. In the more highly organised industries, such as engineering and shipbuilding, a system of collective bargaining had been built up, but for the most part it operated on a district and not on a national level. Consequently, agreed rates of pay for the same kinds of job varied in different parts of the country. In many other industries no joint negotiating machinery had yet emerged and the practice was for wages to be settled piecemeal by individual employers with their workers. In some industries where wages were exceptionally low trade boards had been established under the provisions of the Trade Boards Act of 1909, and these were empowered to fix statutorily enforceable minimum wages for time and piece work. This was the only sector of the field of wages into which the State had encroached.

At the outbreak of war an industrial peace was proclaimed. Employers and workers agreed to leave outstanding differences unsettled while the crisis lasted, and pledged themselves, in the event of new disputes arising, to try and reach an amicable settlement before resorting to a strike or lock-out. The Government, fortified by the belief that the war would not last long, had high hopes that this voluntary gesture by industry would have a restraining influence upon wages. Before the end of 1914, however, the strain of war was beginning to be felt. There was a sharp rise in the cost of living; rumours were going round that contractors were making immense profits; and events in France indicated that the struggle was going to be long. In February 1915 a strike broke out on the Clyde on a wages question and was continued for a month by local leaders in defiance of their union's central executive. Meanwhile, with the pressing need for munitions the Government decided to negotiate with the trade unions with a

view to removing restrictive practices, and a Committee on Production under the chairmanship of the Chief Industrial Commissioner was set up, and turned its attention to the whole industrial field. Acquiring a reputation for impartiality it was not only successful in settling the strike, but it also paved the way for the Treasury Agreement of March 1915 with the engineering and allied unions. Under this agreement the unions surrendered their right to strike in return for a system of genuine arbitration, and the Committee on Production was established as an impartial tribunal for hearing and settling disputes arising out of wages or conditions of employment. Lastly, the Government gave a pledge that it would control the profits of employers.

It was one thing to make an agreement with the trade union leaders; it was another to give it practical effect in the country. The Clyde strike had shown how the authority of the trade unions could be challenged by local leaders and the Treasury Agreement put a new weapon in rebel hands. It was the central executive and not the local leaders, so the latter argued, that had signed away the workers' right to strike and that in future would find itself compelled to accede to the employers' demands. Meanwhile, a continuous rise in the cost of living was militating against a quiet acceptance of the Treasury Agreement. More strikes broke out and the Government was driven to give the Agreement statutory authority. The Munitions of War Act was passed in July 1915. By it strikes and lock-outs on munitions work were declared illegal; a system of compulsory arbitration was established; the Committee on Production was made a statutory body; and the Minister of Munitions was empowered to prohibit increases of wages in 'controlled'¹ establishments.

It is important to emphasise the limited scope of the Act, In the first place the provisions about strikes and disputes applied only to the munitions trades; they did not cover industries, such as mining, which had their own conciliation machinery, but a rider was added that, where such machinery proved ineffective, the dispute could by proclamation be brought within the ambit of the Act.

Secondly, the differences envisaged must be between an employer and his workers. The Act did not apply to strikes against the Government and, as later in the war the principal cause of the major strikes was some feature of Government policy, this omission seriously weakened the Act as an instrument for preserving industrial peace. Lastly, the penalties defined in the Act did not apply to persons instigating strikes, who in common with others charged with conspiracy were left to be dealt with under the Defence of the Realm Act.

Within a fortnight of the Munitions of War Act becoming law 200,000 miners in South Wales came out on strike and a proclamation

¹ See below p. 12.

was issued under the Act. The choice before the Government was embarrassing. If it failed to use its newly acquired powers, the Act might be stillborn; if, on the other hand, it committed itself to a trial of strength, prolonged idleness in the pits might be the cost, and without coal munitions could not be made. From this quandary it found a way of escape by settling the strike through negotiated concessions. The same sort of dilemma was to be repeated with similar solutions in most of the later big strikes as, for example, the engineering strike of April 1917 and the strike in Coventry in the autumn of that year.

Whatever may be the immediate occasion for a strike, the underlying causes are imponderable and, when they can be discovered, they normally reflect a prolonged sense of grievance which has come to the surface on some comparatively minor pretext. The Commissions that were set up in 1917 to study the prevalence of industrial unrest assigned the main reasons to such general factors as the rise in the cost of living, loss of confidence by the men in their union leaders, the operation of the National Service Act, industrial fatigue and the loss of personal freedom which the prosecution of a great war inevitably entailed. Without directly answering the question whether Government interference in labour matters was necessary and, if so, whether statutory arbitration and the prohibition of strikes were the right instruments, they at least refrained from any explicit criticism of those sections of the Munitions of War Act. Nevertheless, it may well be doubted whether the legal prohibition of strikes was an effective instrument or whether in its absence industrial stoppages would have been more frequent. The case for compulsory arbitration was much stronger. It may have failed as a means of settling strikes when they had broken out, but as an instrument for composing differences that might have led to strikes its value during the war was considerable.

From Table 3 it will be seen that the number of stoppages recorded during the mid-war years 1915, 1916 and 1917 was markedly lower

Table 3: Industrial Stoppages 1913-1918

	Number of stoppages beginning in year	Number of workpeople involved			Aggregate number of working days lost
		Directly	Indirectly	Total	
1913	1,459	497,000	167,000	664,000	9,800,000
1914	972	326,000	121,000	447,000	9,880,000
1915	672	401,000	47,000	448,000	2,950,000
1916	532	235,000	41,000	276,000	2,450,000
1917	730	575,000	297,000	872,000	5,650,000
1918	1,165	923,000	193,000	1,116,000	5,880,000

Source: Ministry of Labour

than in 1913 and 1914 and, although during the period 1914 to 1918 the average number of working days lost through strikes and disputes was well over 5 millions, during the three years 1915 to 1917 the average was less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions. The largest number of stoppages occurred in the last year of the war, but in most cases these were of very short duration and the number of working days lost was only slightly more than in the previous year and 40 per cent. less than in 1914.

We may now turn to the provisions in the Munitions of War Act about wages. The authority given to the Minister of Munitions to prohibit increases of wages in 'controlled' establishments was quite inadequate for stabilising wage conditions within the munitions field as a whole. The controlled establishments numbered at the most 6,000 out of the 32,000 firms engaged in munitions production. Consequently, firms not covered by the Act could and did continue to alter wages at their own discretion, and it was difficult to isolate controlled establishments employing much the same types of labour from the effects of these changes. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that in practice the Minister could do little more than accept such increases in wages as had already been agreed between employers and workers. In the event of disagreement the differences had to be referred to the Committee on Production, which the Act had set up as the statutory authority. In determining its awards the Committee throughout the war stood firmly to the principle that advances should be strictly war bonuses and that the pre-war basis should be rigidly maintained. But it handled only a fringe of the problem. By its constitution it was a judicial and not an executive body, and it was only when differences were referred to it that it could by its awards influence the general situation. Moreover, there were large sections of the industrial field, such as the mining industry and the traffic grades on the railways, over which the Committee had no authority at all. Nevertheless, other departments tended more and more to look to the Committee for guidance in dealing with their own problems, and in this indirect way its awards did introduce a measure of stability in the disordered world of wage control.

In the autumn of 1915 the Government, alarmed at the financial position, instructed the Committee on Production to 'freeze' wages in the munitions industries. This decision to use an independent arbitration authority as an instrument for holding down wages at the dictate of the Government aroused the bitter resentment of the trade unions, which not unfairly argued that it was a breach of the Treasury Agreement. Before long, too, evidence began to accumulate that employers were finding ways of getting round the embargo by special allowances, and in 1916 this ill-considered method of effecting economies was countermanded.

For the first two years of its existence the Committee on Production

had made its awards largely on a district or sectional basis. As many of these local claims tended to be supported by the same arguments it would obviously be an economy of time and effort if the awards could be made to apply to the whole of an industry. This procedure was first agreed with the engineering industry and widely adopted by others. In future the Committee met three times a year to consider whether any alterations in wages were warranted. Its awards were binding on all federated firms, and later in the year were by statute made applicable to all other employers within the same industry engaged upon the production of munitions.

This was an advance in co-ordination and also a vindication of the principle of statutory arbitration. How easily however the situation could get out of hand will be seen from one more example. With the wide installation of automatic machines, especially in the engineering industry, a stimulus was given to piece work and to the system of payments by results which had been statutorily recognised. Good money was earned by the semi-skilled male and female workers engaged on these simple processes and invited comparison with the wages of time workers. This gave rise to what has been called the 'skilled man's grievance'. The Government had recently abolished the 'leaving certificates', which had been a perpetual grievance, and was anxious that the control which it had surrendered should not result in the movement of skilled workers to less important work where higher remuneration was offered. Accordingly the Minister of Munitions decided to grant an increase of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to the weekly earnings of fully qualified skilled time workers in the engineering and foundry trades. Apart from the question whether such a bonus was justified, endless difficulties arose in determining the workers who were eligible for it, and by the summer of 1918 it was paid to all adult male workers on munitions, whether on time or piece rates. Thus the original purpose of the grant was largely defeated and an impetus was given to claims from other workers for some comparable benefit. The decision in January 1918 to make the Ministry of Labour the final authority for wages regulation restored some semblance of order, but it did not arrest the urge for higher wages which continued till the end of the war.

DILUTION

The regulation of wages was also an important factor in the long negotiations between the Government and both sides of the munitions industries on the introduction of dilution as a means of alleviating the effects of the acute shortage of skilled workers. The first step was to obtain the agreement of the trade unions to the suspension during the war of their peace-time restrictive practices, which provided that only skilled men with certain definite qualifications could be permitted to

carry out certain classes of work and distinguished as between various classes of skilled men the classes of work that were peculiarly the province of each. The unions accepted the need for the removal of these restrictions and, on the assurance of the Government that it would control the profits of the firms in which trade customs were relaxed, their agreement in principle was embodied in the Treasury Agreement of March 1915.

Dilution had been accepted in theory but to translate it into practice both technical and psychological difficulties had to be surmounted. On the technical side processes had to be subdivided, automatic machines installed and plans made for the upgrading of existing workers and the introduction of new labour. On the human side employers and men had to be convinced of the practicability and advisability of dilution. Behind all other obstacles hung the cloud of employers' profits, and it soon became clear that before progress could be made the workers must be satisfied that it was the nation and not the private employer to which they had agreed to surrender their rights. In the Munitions of War Act of July 1915 an attempt was made to put things right. Controlled establishments in the munitions industries were created and in these the owners, while retaining freedom of management, were placed under certain obligations. Their profits were limited and alterations in wages could not be made without the consent of the Minister of Munitions. In return they were given the right to have suspended in their establishments trade union restrictions which interfered with output, and to bring workers who were idle or inefficient before a munitions tribunal. The workers were thus given the assurance that in the agreement into which their leaders had entered on their behalf and which was now given the force of law they were surrendering their privileges only in establishments where the profits of their labour would go largely to the State.

The passage of the Munitions of War Act did not lead to the introduction of dilution on a large scale. Prejudices were still widespread and countless questions of detail were raised. Infinite patience and tact were needed, together with experience in handling the more technical problems that dilution entailed. Finally after various experiments a Director of Dilution was appointed at the headquarters of the Ministry of Munitions and local offices were set up in each of the employment exchange districts under a Chief Dilution Officer with a considerable staff. This administrative arrangement was a success, but there still remained the thorny problem of the wages and conditions on which semi-skilled men and women could be employed. Recommendations were discussed and agreed with the Executives of the unions concerned, but so strong were the apprehensions of the rank and file that nothing short of a statutory enactment of the accepted provisions would meet the case. In the Amending Act of 1916 the Minister was given power

by Order to give directions about the rate of wages and conditions of employment of women and of semi-skilled and unskilled men in controlled establishments. In this case the initiative taken by the Government was rewarded by the speed with which schemes of dilution were put into operation.

TRANSFER OF WORKERS

The lifting of restrictions and the imposition of regulations, which we have been describing, undoubtedly facilitated the transfer of existing workers into war industries and the absorption of new blood to offset the continuous drainage of civilian manpower for the Armed Forces. Nevertheless the movement began on a voluntary basis and for the most part continued as such throughout the war. A variety of motives came into play. The attraction of higher pay and the protection that munitions industries gave from military service were for many strong inducements for leaving 'unessential' employment. For others patriotism may have been the uppermost thought and perhaps in the case of some women who had not previously gone out to work there was the feeling that with their men in the Forces they would be happier with some outside interest to distract them. Whatever the motives, and no doubt they were often mixed, it was through the voluntary response of a free labour market under the guidance of the Government that the necessary redeployment of the manpower of the country was achieved.

The main source from which labour for the output of munitions was obtained was the less essential industries, and here the policy of the Government of spreading its contracts often meant that men could move on to war work without leaving the firm in which they worked. The extent to which workers had voluntarily switched their employment is shown by the fact that when late in 1915 a scheme of Voluntary Munitions Workers was launched a high proportion of the large number of applications came from men who were already on work of national importance. The second main contribution came from women. Even before the dilution schemes had been worked out large numbers had entered industries, such as textiles, which had heavy orders for khaki cloth, while from 1916 onwards they were progressively used in munitions on what had previously been regarded as men's jobs. By the end of the war the number of women in employment had risen by over $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions. Other smaller but useful accessions of manpower were made through older men remaining on at work or returning to it and through boys entering employment before the normal age. Lastly, steps were taken at different times and in different ways to comb out of the Army men with skill for the output of munitions and late in the war an Army Reserve Munitions Workers Scheme was devised. Under it men who were not for the time being needed in

the Army or were fit for home service only were allocated to munitions work at which they were obliged to remain. They were thus less free agents than workers in the other classes we have been considering. This was not inequitable as the civilian employment to which they were sent was in lieu of military service for which they had been conscripted.

The voluntary movement of workers and offers of service, if left unguided, would not have made for an orderly and economical use of manpower. What was needed was some authority that would advise men and women of the openings which were important and best suited to their capabilities and experience. This want was supplied by the local employment exchanges that had been set up after the passing of the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909. With their knowledge of local industry and the experience they had gained in the five years preceding the war they were equipped to assist employers to fill their vacancies and workers in their search for useful employment. Persuasion was thus the only instrument of Government control upon the freedom of workers to choose and change their employment. As the responsibility for manpower questions was in the hands of more than one Ministry, each with its own system of collecting statistical information, no comprehensive figures about changes in the numbers of industrial workers during the 1914/1918 war are available. A very broad survey of the main features of employment is provided by Table 4 which is based upon returns made by employers to the Board of Trade. Although the samples upon which the statistics are based vary considerably and the resultant figures are uncertain in different degrees, they are probably sufficiently accurate to provide a comparison between the position at the beginning and at the end of the war.

(iii)

The State Machine

In the years preceding the First World War the Government in response to a growing public concern about the welfare of workers had promoted social reforms designed to mitigate the ill-effects of bad working conditions, poverty and unemployment. The Factories Acts were the precursors of a series of measures, which included the Poor Law and the Workmen's Compensation Act. Latest in time—and most pertinent to a study of manpower—come the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909, which set up exchanges with the object of bringing employers and workers into touch with each other, and the Insurance Act of 1911, which provided in certain trades for the payment of benefit to unemployed persons who were willing but unable to find work. These reforms were enacted sporadically to meet the changing needs of the times and they can hardly be regarded as part of a single

comprehensive scheme. This may be one of the reasons why their administration was spread over three Departments of State—the Local Government Board (now the Ministry of Health), the Home Office and the Board of Trade. Of these the Home Office had the major share of responsibilities, and indeed it looked as if the supervision of the Government code for labour might come to be concentrated in its hands. It was, therefore, of great significance that when the Labour Exchange and the Insurance Acts were passed it was not the Home Office, but a special department of the Board of Trade, to which their administration was entrusted. In 1917 the duties of this special department were transferred to the new Ministry of Labour.

Failure to define and co-ordinate the respective spheres of responsibility of the three Departments of State on labour matters was in a period of continuing peace of relatively little moment. Its disadvantage was forcibly suggested when at the outbreak of the war it was apparent that none of them had attempted to formulate a plan that, in the event of a call for a large number of volunteers for the Forces, would safeguard industry from the loss of its essential workers. In consequence in the first flush of patriotic fervour numbers of workers who should not have been allowed to leave their jobs rushed to the recruiting offices and enlisted. After some three months' experience of this uncontrolled volunteering the Government realised that it must devise a scheme which would produce the fighters that the Army so badly needed and would at the same time protect the munitions industries from further losses of their skilled workers. On the administrative plane such a scheme, it might be thought, called for the setting up of a single Department of State, to exercise an impartial control over the allocation of manpower between the conflicting demands. To this solution, however, the Government showed no apparent inclination to turn, and in the organisation of the State machine no significant change was made until June 1915 when the Ministry of Munitions was created. This innovation may perhaps be regarded as a first attempt to establish a single central authority to deal with manpower; but, if so, it was doomed to failure. The new Ministry was only concerned with the munitions industries. Set up to give a drive to the output of guns and ammunition, it was naturally determined to safeguard the labour force of the munitions industries. It was thus unable to bring to the solution of the questions involved the impartiality that was essential to any department entrusted with the duty of adjudicating between the claims of the Services and industry.

After two abortive experiments in 1916 the Department of the Director-General of National Service was set up in the New Year by the Lloyd George Coalition Government. This was a failure and the reasons are instructive. The new department was given authority over civilian labour only, while the recruiting machine stayed with the War

Table 4: Employment in the United Kingdom in November 1918 as compared with July 1914

	Thousands											
	Males						Females					
	Numbers employed			Increase (+) or decrease (-) Nov. 1918-July 1914			Numbers employed			Increase (+) or decrease (-) Nov. 1918-July 1914		
	November 1918	July 1914	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	November 1918	July 1914	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number
Metal industries	1,872.3	1,634.0	+ 238.3	+ 14.6	596.1	170.0	+ 426.1	+ 250.6				
Chemicals industries	161.3	159.0	+ 2.3	+ 1.4	103.1	40.0	+ 63.1	+ 157.8				
Government Dockyards, Arsenals, etc.	275.7	76.0	+ 199.7	+262.8	245.5	2.0	+ 243.5	+ 12,175.0				
Total	2,309.3	1,869.0	+ 440.3	+ 23.6	944.7	212.0	+ 732.7	+ 345.6				
Agriculture (in Great Britain)	578.0	800.0	- 222.0	- 27.8	95.0	80.0	+ 15.0	+ 18.8				
Mines and quarries	1,039.0	1,266.0	- 227.0	- 17.9	12.5	7.0	+ 5.5	+ 78.6				
National Government	195.7	244.0	- 48.3	- 19.8	234.2	66.0	+ 168.2	+ 254.8				
Local Government	251.1	376.0	- 124.9	- 33.2	228.6	196.2	+ 32.4	+ 16.5				
Gas, water and electricity	53.2	63.0	- 9.8	- 15.6	5.3	.6	+ 4.7	+ 783.3				
Transport	857.4	1,161.0	- 303.6	- 26.1	115.4	18.2	+ 97.2	+ 534.1				
Total	2,974.4	3,910.0	- 935.6	- 23.9	691.0	368.0	+ 323.0	+ 87.8				
Food, drink and tobacco	246.5	360.0	- 113.5	- 31.5	230.6	196.0	+ 34.6	+ 17.7				
Textiles	408.4	625.0	- 216.6	- 34.7	818.5	863.0	- 44.5	- 5.2				
Clothing	181.2	287.0	- 105.8	- 36.9	558.5	612.0	- 53.5	- 8.7				
Building	438.3	920.0	- 481.7	- 52.4	31.4	7.0	+ 24.4	+ 348.6				
Other industries and services	1,613.2	2,639.0	- 1,025.8	- 38.9	1,671.9	1,018.0	+ 653.9	+ 64.2				
Total	2,887.6	4,831.0	- 1,943.4	- 40.2	3,310.9	2,696.0	+ 614.9	+ 22.8				
Grand Total	8,171.3	10,610.0	- 2,438.7	- 23.0	4,946.6	3,276.0	+ 1,670.6	+ 51.0				

Office. Its relation to the Ministry of Munitions was left in the air and significantly it was given no control over the employment exchanges, through which the whole system of labour supply operated. The department's life was as short as it was uneasy and unfruitful. In August 1917, it was replaced by a newly constituted Department of State—the Ministry of National Service.

The new Ministry, working under the guidance of the War Priority Committee of the Cabinet of which the Minister himself was a member, was now given full control of the allocation of manpower whether for the Forces or for industry. In its charter it was instructed to survey the whole field of British manpower so as to be able to advise the Cabinet what any proposal put up by a supply department meant in terms of labour. It was authorised to prepare lists of reserved occupations so that industry should not lose its skilled men; to arrange for transfers of workers from less important jobs to work of national importance; and to obtain for the Services such men as could be enlisted without damage to vital services and trade. In fact the Ministry was placed in a position where under the Cabinet it could exercise, within the limited statutory powers at its disposal, an unchallengeable control over the manpower of the country. On assuming office the Minister, with the failure of his predecessor in mind, made two important decisions on matters of administration. He reached an understanding with the supply departments that, while they would continue to carry out their normal activities, they would provide from their industries the quotas for the Army which he as the chief co-ordinating authority prescribed. Secondly, he did not take over the employment exchanges, but chose instead to work through them and, to avoid departmental conflicts, he appointed as Director-General of National Labour Supply the chief executive officer of the exchanges.

If the Government had been slow in recognising the need for a single central authority and if its earlier attempts to put the policy into operation were ill-conceived, the experiment in its final form was only open to one substantial criticism—that it was nearly too late. But the three years of trial and error had at least taught this lesson that in a long war success or failure may hinge upon the use or misuse of the nation's manpower.

CHAPTER II

THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

(i)

The Industrial Population¹

IN THE YEARS between the two World Wars there were some striking changes in both the size and the distribution of the manpower of the country. Between 1921 and 1937 the population of Great Britain rose by $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. from about 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 46 millions; but this increase was very unequally distributed. In London and the Home Counties it was about 18 per cent. and in the Midlands 11 per cent.; at the other end of the scale it was less than 1 per cent. in Lancashire, while in South Wales there was a decrease of 9 per cent. Even more significant was the increase in the number of workers insured against unemployment. Between 1923—the first year in which the Ministry of Labour began to compile statistics based upon the midsummer exchange of insurance books—and 1937—the year before the defence programme effectively started—the number of insured persons rose by approximately $2\frac{1}{4}$ millions, or 19.3 per cent., from a little under 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ to a little over 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ millions. As in the case of the population as a whole there were marked variations in the geographical incidence of these changes. In Southern England including the Midland Counties the rate of increase was some 40 per cent. above, and in London and the South East taken together almost twice as high as, the national average. In all other administrative divisions expansion was below the rate for the country as a whole, and in the North of England and in Wales the number of insured persons in 1937 was only slightly in excess of the 1923 figures.

These marked variations between the North and South of Great Britain in the distribution of the insured population were due to the vicissitudes of the major industries, which were reflected in the growing or shrinking strength of their labour forces. Tables 5 and 6 show the changes that had taken place between the beginning and end of the period, with additional figures for 1929 the year before the depression

¹ See further *Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population* 1940. (Cmd. 6153).

Table 5: Estimated numbers insured under the Unemployment Insurance Scheme
Analysis by industry

Great Britain and Northern Ireland				
Industry	July 1923	July 1929	July 1932	July 1937
Metal industries:				
Metal manufacture	360,780	324,000	305,320	335,940
Engineering, etc.	816,680	757,870	725,110	822,380
Construction and repair of vehicles	270,630	318,500	319,430	415,350
Shipbuilding and ship-repairing	269,970	204,500	181,930	172,810
Metal goods, etc.	480,630	528,080	575,250	739,820
Chemical industries	213,880	218,360	216,320	231,730
Fishing	24,760	27,680	31,140	34,250
Mining and quarrying	1,346,890	1,181,200	1,149,440	972,680
National and local government	422,930	392,890	461,630	516,970
Gas, water and electricity supply	173,040	162,030	174,210	218,480
Transport and shipping	791,800	806,790	874,060	910,680
Food, drink and tobacco	499,990	512,440	535,810	578,650
Textiles	1,311,410	1,315,420	1,268,300	1,166,560
Clothing, boots and shoes	579,210	581,270	605,340	617,430
Other manufactures	956,560	1,075,130	1,127,580	1,213,530
Building and civil engineering	843,960	990,410	1,147,280	1,329,400
Distributive trades	1,253,980	1,679,090	1,950,240	2,061,390
Miscellaneous services	868,700	1,018,340	1,161,410	1,358,950
Total	11,485,800	12,094,000	12,809,800	13,697,000

Source: Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom (Cmd. 5353 and Cmd. 6232)

NOTE

Figures for 1923 relate to persons aged 16 and over. For subsequent years they relate to those aged 16 to 64 inclusive.

began and for 1932 the year in which its effects were most strongly felt.¹

This statistical picture sets out in contrasting relief the depression in the basic industries indigenous to the North and West which were the chief, if not the sole, source of employment in those areas, and the

¹ Persons in agricultural occupations were not included in the Unemployment Insurance Scheme until 1936. The total number of regular and casual workers (excluding occupiers, occupiers' wives and domestic servants) employed on agricultural holdings of more than one acre in Great Britain fell more or less continuously from 892,411 in 1923 to 742,412 in 1937. (See *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom*, Cmd. 5353, p. 279 and Cmd. 6232, p. 293).

Table 6: Analysis by Administrative Divisions

Administrative Division	Estimated number of insured persons aged 16-64				Index numbers (July 1923=100)			
	July 1923	July 1929	July 1932	July 1937	July 1923	July 1929	July 1932	July 1937
		Thousands						
London	2,054	2,346	2,523	2,855	100·0	114·2	122·8	139·0
South-Eastern .	685	830	913	1,052	100·0	121·2	133·3	153·6
South-Western .	703	792	856	940	100·0	112·7	121·8	133·7
Midlands .	1,618	1,772	1,869	2,053	100·0	109·5	115·5	126·9
North-Eastern .	1,207	1,308	1,367	1,428	100·0	108·4	113·3	118·3
North-Western .	1,950	2,056	2,126	2,122	100·0	105·4	109·0	108·8
Northern .	761	743	787	785	100·0	97·6	103·4	103·2
Scotland .	1,249	1,270	1,340	1,398	100·0	101·7	107·3	111·9
Wales .	599	583	619	610	100·0	97·3	103·3	101·8
Great Britain .	10,826	11,700	12,400	13,243	100·0	108·1	114·5	122·3

Source: Ministry of Labour Gazette, November 1938, p. 422

NOTES

1. For the year 1923 when persons over 65 years of age were insured against unemployment an approximate estimate has been made of the numbers aged 16-64.
2. The figures relate to the areas as at July 1938.
3. Persons insured under the special schemes for the banking and insurance industries are excluded.

expansion of consumer goods industries supplying and servicing the civilian population directly. In the former group there were three outstanding examples. In coal-mining and shipbuilding, the decline in manpower was practically continuous and by 1937 the number of insured workers in each industry had decreased to about two-thirds of the total insured in 1923. In cotton the employment situation showed relatively little change till 1930 when the slump began. Seven years later the labour force had dropped by over 150,000 to a total of 408,000, which was 28 per cent. less than the figure for 1923. In all three industries the chief cause of their falling output and manpower was trade depression and the loss of foreign markets upon which their earlier prosperity had largely depended. But there were also contributory factors. The products of the basic industries were in competition with newly developed substitutes of equal or greater serviceability—coal with oil and electricity as sources of power in transport and manufacturing industries, and cotton with rayon. Furthermore, the introduction of more and better mechanical devices meant that the same volume of output could, if there was a demand for it, be produced

by fewer workers. In coal-mining, for example, while output between 1935 and 1937 was 15.7 per cent. lower than it had been in the years immediately preceding the First World War, the number of miners had dropped by 28 per cent. Thus, whereas in the long period of prosperity increase in output had been accompanied by an increase in employment which had attracted workers from other parts of the country, the basic industries were now left with a surplus of workers that was proportionately greater than the decline in their output, and for whom there were in the localities few opportunities for alternative employment.

In general engineering the number of insured workers fell continuously till in 1934 the total was 144,000 less than eleven years previously; but thereafter with the general revival of trade new orders were placed and by 1937 the labour force was only some 53,000 below its 1923 strength. By contrast, electrical engineering and vehicle construction steadily expanded their output and at the end as compared with the beginning of the period under review showed an increase of 88 per cent. and 83 per cent. respectively in the number of workers on their books. There was a great demand for motor vehicles of all sorts. New types of aeroplanes were being designed and tested, and with the greater safety and reliability that were the fruits of experiment, the public imagination was awakened to the possibility of travel by air, and industry to its commercial potentialities. Firms making motor cars and planes were to be found in different parts of the country, but the mecca of the motor manufacturing industry was Birmingham. A number of factors accounted for this. Birmingham was well served by railways, it had coal-fields in the vicinity and it contained a great variety of subsidiary industries, which could provide the tools and accessories that the constructional engineering firms required. Conditions were thus favourable for a developing prosperity, and during the years of depression the district because of the multiplicity of its industries suffered less than other towns which depended for the employment of their citizens largely upon a single industry, such as coal or shipbuilding.

Between the wars there was also a rapid expansion of manufacturing industries of a relatively light character, whose products ranged from electrical apparatus and appliances to vacuum cleaners and other household gadgets. It was an age of invention and the times were propitious for commercialising its discoveries. Electricity provided a new source of power and the development of road transport gave easier access to markets, while in some cases tariffs prevented the home producer from being undercut by his foreign competitor. Many of these light industries established themselves in Greater London and in the Home Counties, some of them both manufacturing and assembling the component parts, others obtaining the components from neighbouring

firms and concentrating on the finished article. For such industries proximity to a ready market is an essential condition of profit making, and London had advantages which no provincial town possessed and which are not measured solely in terms of population. It is the first market that the industrialist is eager to capture because of the value of its goodwill. It contains a large body of potentially wealthy consumers and attracts others from the provinces, and it is a centre in which industrialists can meet to discuss their problems and their progress.

Lastly, with the rise in the population which, as we have seen, was most pronounced in the southern half of the country, there were demands for more and better amenities and services. New houses, shops and schools were put in commission and in the building industry employment steadily rose until in 1937 the number of insured workers was 56 per cent. higher than in 1923. Even more significant was the growth of the distributive trades, which had been unchecked during the years of trade depression. In 1937 they were providing employment for two million workers—an increase since 1923 of some 800,000.

(ii)

Unemployment¹

It is against this industrial background that we must now consider unemployment, whose dark clouds hung persistently over the country in the inter-war years. The immediate post-war boom was quickly succeeded by a heavy trade depression, and by the end of 1921 the number of unemployed was not far short of two millions. In the next decade there was a slow but fairly steady recovery despite the set-backs in 1926 of the stoppage in the mines and the general strike; but apart from seasonal fluctuations unemployment never dropped below the 1,200,000 mark. Hopes of a revival in trade were then dashed by the international depression and in 1932 there were over 2,700,000 unemployed. A gradual recovery had by 1937 reduced the average rate of unemployment to about the level at which it had stood before the depression began; but then a further slump in the United States, a general fall in commodity prices and a dislocation of the export market through growing international tension caused another sharp recession in trade. The consequent decline in employment was not arrested until after the Munich crisis preparations for war began in earnest.

From Table 7 it will be seen that the general unemployment rate for the country as a whole ranged between 1921 and 1938 from just under 10 per cent. to a little over 22 per cent. with an average of 14.2 per cent.

¹ See in greater detail Sir William Beveridge: *Full employment in a Free Society*.

Table 7: General unemployment rate 1921-1938

Year	Percentage unemployed		Year	Percentage unemployed	
	G.B. & N.I.	G.B.		G.B. & N.I.	G.B.
1921	17.0	16.6	1930	16.1	15.8
1922	14.3	14.1	1931	21.3	21.1
1923	11.7	11.6	1932	22.1	21.9
1924	10.3	10.2	1933	19.9	19.8
1925	11.3	11.0	1934	16.7	16.6
1926	12.5	12.3	1935	15.5	15.3
1927	9.7	9.6	1936	13.1	12.9
1928	10.8	10.7	1937	10.8	10.6
1929	10.4	10.3	1938	12.9	12.6

These figures can do no more than give a broad indication of the fluctuating severity of unemployment expressed as a mean for the whole country. But the evil was not evenly distributed; on the contrary it attacked industries and localities with widely different degrees of intensity. Nor does the table throw any light on the length of time for which men and women were kept in enforced idleness. To make good these deficiencies some further analysis is desirable.

Turning first to unemployment by industries, a few examples, set out in Table 8, will show the marked divergencies from the average rates of unemployment for the country as a whole. The four years 1924, 1929, 1932, and 1937 have been selected for comparison, because 1932 was the year when the depression was at its worst and in the other three years the average rates of unemployment were about the same. Furthermore 1929 and 1937 represented the crests and 1932 the trough of what economists have identified (and variously explained) as a cyclical trade fluctuation.

Table 8:

A. Examples of industries with low rates of unemployment

Industry	1924 (average rate of unemploy- ment 10.3)	1929 (average rate 10.4)	1932 (average rate 22.1)	1937 (average rate 10.8)
Scientific Instruments	4.7	3.0	11.2	2.8
Tobacco	8.1	4.2	8.7	4.6
Tramways and Buses	3.2	3.1	6.2	3.4
Laundries	6.2	4.3	9.1	6.1
Distributive Trades	6.6	6.1	12.2	8.8

B. Examples of industries with high rates of unemployment

General Engineering	15.2	9.6	29.1	5.4
Tin Plate	8.5	25.4	38.8	13.2
Steel Rolling	21.1	19.5	46.8	10.1
Shipbuilding	29.3	23.8	62.8	23.8
Cotton	13.7	13.1	28.5	11.5
Jute	9.9	12.9	42.2	26.8
Coal Mining	5.7	15.5	33.9	14.7

It will be seen that, while the lowest rates of unemployment were in industries and trades servicing the civilian population directly, it was the heavy industries and textiles dependent upon foreign markets that suffered most in the depression. Of further significance were the varying fortunes of industries in the latter group after the depression had passed. In general engineering, for example, the rate of unemployment was by 1937 4 per cent. lower than in 1929 and about 10 per cent. below its 1924 level, while in shipbuilding, which had been very heavily hit, the percentage of unemployed had fallen to the 1929 level, which was 5½ lower than that of 1924. On the other hand in 1937 the rate of unemployment in coal-mining, although a slight improvement on 1929, was 9 per cent. above what it had been in 1924; and in jute, in which employment had steadily declined since 1924, the percentage of unemployed was more than double that for 1929.

Just as the rate of unemployment varied industry by industry, so wide differences were found in one part of the country compared with another. Table 9 based on the administrative divisions of the Ministry of Labour tells the story.

Table 9: Unemployment rates by divisions 1929-1937

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
London	5·6	8·1	12·2	13·5	11·8	9·2	8·5	7·0	6·3
S. Eastern	5·6	8·0	12·0	14·3	11·5	8·7	8·1	7·2	6·7
S. Western	8·1	10·4	14·5	17·1	15·7	13·1	11·6	9·4	7·8
Midlands	9·3	14·7	20·3	20·1	17·4	12·9	11·2	9·2	7·2
N. Eastern	13·7	20·2	27·4	28·5	26·0	22·1	20·7	13·5	11·0
N. Western	13·3	23·8	28·2	25·8	23·5	20·8	19·7	17·0	14·0
Northern	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22·9	17·9
Scotland	12·1	18·5	26·6	27·7	26·1	23·1	21·3	18·7	15·9
Wales	19·3	25·9	32·4	36·5	34·6	32·3	31·2	29·4	22·3
Great Britain	10·4	15·8	21·1	21·9	19·8	16·6	15·3	12·9	10·6

It will be seen that, whereas the four southern divisions had an average rate of unemployment below the level for the country as a whole, in the northern divisions of England, and in Scotland and Wales the percentages were twice as high as in the South. In Wales, where owing to the long depression in the coal-fields unemployment was most severe, the rate at the beginning and end of the period was nearly four times as high as in London. Within the divisions there were also wide local variations. In Lancashire, for example, the rate at Leyland was as low as 2.9 per cent. and at Hindley as high as 37.2 per cent. Similarly in Berkshire, a southern county with light unemployment, the range ran from 2.8 per cent. at Didcot to 10.2 per cent. at Wokingham. These divisional and local variations reflected, of course, the state

of employment in the industries indigenous to them, and they tended to persist year by year in roughly the same ratio. Although there was a considerable transfer of workers away from the depressed areas, it was neither in volume nor in permanence sufficient to bring the high rates of unemployment in the north country and Wales substantially closer to the low rates in the South. For that to happen fresh opportunities for employment would have first to be made available in the distressed areas by the introduction of new industries under the guidance of the Government. In the resettlement of workers after the Second World War the need for such a policy was not forgotten.

In 1932 the Ministry of Labour began to classify the unemployed according to the period for which they had been out of work and three years earlier they had made a sample investigation. The recorded results for four selected years are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Duration of Unemployment (men and women aged 16-64)

A. NUMBERS					
Date	Less than 3 months	3 months and less than 6	6 months and less than 9	9 months and less than 12	12 months and over
Sept. 1929 .	758,800	102,900	37,250	22,750	45,100
Aug. 1932 .	1,485,152	277,783	184,518	156,443	412,245
Aug. 1936 .	727,863	125,307	80,549	60,219	331,635
Aug. 1939 .	622,408	95,772	63,104	52,819	244,000

B. PERCENTAGES					
Sept. 1929 .	78.5	10.6	3.8	2.4	4.7
Aug. 1932 .	59.0	11.1	7.3	6.2	16.4
Aug. 1936 .	54.9	9.5	6.1	4.5	25.0
Aug. 1939 .	57.7	8.9	5.9	4.9	22.6

It will be seen that in 1929 approximately 90 per cent. of the unemployed had been out of work less than six months and only 5 per cent. for a year or more. In 1936 the number unemployed for under six months was much the same as in 1929 but the percentage was now 64.4, while the percentage of those unemployed for a year or more had risen to 25. This change was the direct result of the depression and, although in the years after 1932 there was a steady reduction in the numbers in each category of the above Table, the fact that in 1939 there were still nearly 250,000 who had been unemployed for at least a year indicates how difficult it was, especially for older men, to find employment when they had been so long idle and the will to work had been weakened or undermined. This was the tragedy of unemployment.

Variations in the duration of unemployment in different districts more or less conformed with their rates of unemployment. Where the rates were high, the percentage of persons unemployed for long periods was correspondingly high; where the rate was low, most of the unemployed had been out of work continuously for a short time. Thus in 1937 71 per cent. of the unemployed in London had been idle for less than three months, whereas in Wales the percentage was only 38 and almost two out of every five workers had had no work for over a year. The position in the northern divisions of Great Britain was similar to that in Wales. Thus in duration no less than in volume the North and South of the country provided sharply contrasted records of unemployment.

(iii)

Employment and Training¹

From this analysis of the volume and impact of unemployment we may now turn to the other side of the picture and review the measures taken to help men and women to find work and to acquire qualifications that would improve their marketable value.

In the immediate post-war years there were two major problems—how to help the disabled who were unable to return to their former occupations or in the more severe cases were unfit for ordinary employment, and how to enable the younger men, whose education or training for a skilled occupation or profession had been interrupted or prevented by the war, to make up for lost time. A number of schemes were made and put into operation and in all of them the emphasis was upon training. The most novel and in many ways the most important, which was intended primarily for disabled ex-servicemen, was the Industrial Training Scheme. During the war the Ministry of Munitions had as an experiment set up five instructional factories in which short practical training was given to semi-skilled men and women, who under dilution agreements were to be employed upon processes that had hitherto been part of the skilled man's job. These were taken over by the Ministry of Labour and by the end of 1920 their number had been increased tenfold. The centres were laid out on the lines of commercial workshops and instruction was given by skilled tradesmen on the actual production of articles intended for sale. The time spent in the factory, which was adapted to the mature years of the trainees, ranged from nine to twelve months, and this was followed by an improvership period of some three to twelve months in a private employer's workshop. In the choice of trades to be taught the Ministry was advised by technical committees of employers and workers, and their co-operation was also a great help in finding employment for the men when their

¹ See *Ministry of Labour Reports* for the inter-war years.

training was completed. While the post-war boom lasted the scheme flourished but, with heavy unemployment setting in in 1922, its activities had to be severely curtailed and by the end of 1925 all Government Instructional Factories had been closed down and training was available only in private firms. By that date some 90,000 disabled ex-servicemen had passed through courses of training.

For the more severely disabled special workshops were set up by voluntary organisations. In these men were taught how to make furniture, brushes, toys and such other marketable products as their different disabilities did not prevent or discourage them from handling. Of these centres, which were run on a non-profit-making basis, perhaps the best known were the Lord Robert's Memorial Workshops and the British Legion Poppy Factory.

For the young apprentice whose training had been broken by enlistment financial provision was made under the Interrupted Apprenticeship Scheme, to enable him to resume his training and to qualify in a shorter period than under peace-time arrangements as a skilled worker in his chosen trade. In this way some 45,000 apprentices completed their training and brought a valuable addition of skill to industry. For the resettlement in civilian life of ex-officers and other ranks of similar educational qualifications an Appointments Department was in 1918 set up within the Ministry of Labour. It had two branches, one for organising training and the other for giving advice and help in obtaining employment. The former administered jointly with the Education Departments and the Ministry of Agriculture a scheme of training and maintenance grants to enable men to continue their education at universities and technical colleges, to train for the professions or to receive practical instruction on farming. By the end of 1924, when the scheme was virtually closed, about 54,000 had received grants, of whom 33,000 had gone to universities or technical colleges. In the next year the Appointments Branch was wound up and its work was transferred to the Officers' Branch of the British Legion. In its short life it had helped over 35,000 officers and 44,000 other ranks to obtain employment.

But, although under these schemes numbers of ex-servicemen were resettled in civilian life, there were countless more who often through no fault of their own found themselves, in common with civilians who had either lost their jobs or had been unable to start upon their careers, in the ranks of the workless. The only effective cure for this mass unemployment was the revival of trade; but while waiting for this far-off event the Ministry of Labour set itself to devise administrative measures for reducing the numbers out of work and for palliating the misfortunes of those for whom no employment could be found. This was the dominant feature of manpower policy throughout most of the inter-war years.

As a means of alleviating distress the most comprehensive measure was the provision of unemployment benefit for those for whom no work was immediately available. The more positive measures that were introduced fell into two categories; schemes for the economic development of depressed areas and for transferring workers to other districts where there were better opportunities for employment, and schemes for providing training both for the able-bodied and the physically handicapped, which would improve their chances of obtaining employment when with the passing of trade depression a more buoyant labour market was restored. Apart from their contemporary significance these plans have a further interest to the historian of the Second World War. They foreshadowed the ways in which the manpower resources of the country were to be deployed and developed when the demands of the war programme called for a vast redistribution of workers and when training was to prove one of the most effective means of offsetting the scarcity of skill.

In times of economic disturbance the first essential is the organisation of the labour market. It was, therefore, fortunate that there were already in existence employment exchanges of the Ministry of Labour in the larger industrial towns with branch offices in rural or less industrial areas. These had both before and during the 1914-18 war become familiar with local conditions and had learned something of the technique for handling employers and workers. But they were still in their infancy. The exercise of the new and developing duties that they were now to be asked to perform was by 1939 to convert them into employment agencies of wide experience and established ability.

The original purpose of the exchanges was to bring employers looking for labour and suitable workers seeking employment into touch with each other. In the post-war period this still remained their primary function, but they were also given a new and exacting responsibility. The Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920 had extended the scheme of compulsory insurance to all workers under a contract of service with the exception of agricultural workers and domestic servants, and its administration was entrusted to the Ministry of Labour. In practice this meant that all applications for unemployment benefit had to be made to an employment exchange, which had then to examine each claim and, when satisfied that suitable work was not available, pay the appropriate sum. The time and care involved call for no elaboration. What is important to emphasize was the wisdom of selecting the exchanges for this work. If separate offices under some other Ministry had been set up to deal with claims for benefit, the unemployed would have come to be regarded as a group separate from the working community. The assignment to one and the same organisation of responsibility for both employment and unemployment was a clear admission that both are facets of the same problem and that the

unemployed applicant for benefit is, and should always be treated as, a potential worker.

The record of the number of placings made by the exchanges is evidence of a growing service. Dropping after the post-war boom to a minimum of 716,000 in 1922, they rose almost continuously year by year to a total of 2,739,000 in 1938. This achievement was the fruit of effort and patience. For example, vacancies that could not be filled locally had to be circulated to other exchanges and, when a suitable and willing worker had been found, arrangements made for his transfer. This machinery by which one exchange was linked with others under the control of the divisional office was of particular value in operating the scheme of industrial transfers, which was inaugurated in 1928 to assist the distressed areas. Under its financial assistance was made available to workers willing to go to work in other parts of the country when it seemed unlikely that employment would be available in their home areas, and the actual transfers including the payment of allowances were carried out by the exchanges. The success of this scheme varied, of course, with the state of the labour market. In 1929 and 1937, when the demand for workers was strong, over 40,000 were transferred each year; in 1932 and 1933 when the effects of the depression were being felt, the numbers dropped to less than 14,000. Moreover, a substantial proportion of those who had been sent to definite jobs returned to the depressed areas out of which they had been transferred. On the other hand, in 1936 and the first half of 1937, beside the number transferred under the scheme, more than twice as many moved of their own accord to other areas in response to the firmer tone of the labour market. In 1937 some 200,000 local vacancies were filled through the exchanges by workers from other parts of the country.

There can be no question of the value of the work that the exchanges carried out on behalf of the unemployed. Nevertheless, the free service that they offered to employers and workers was not as widely patronised as might have been expected. Of the total number of vacancies for insured workers filled each year only one third at the most were from submissions made by the exchanges. To a considerable extent employers continued to use their own methods of seeking and selecting the labour they wanted, and workers to find employment through their trade unions and private agencies or by answering advertisements. This reluctance to use the Employment Service—which, it should be added, was much less marked in some districts than in others—was no doubt largely due to the association in the minds of the public of the exchange with the place where the dole was paid out.

In April 1934 the Government appointed investigators to examine conditions in certain parts of the country which were suffering from acute industrial depression. Their recommendations were embodied

in the Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act which received the Royal Assent on 21st December of that year. This Act provided for the appointment of two Commissioners, one for England and Wales and the other for Scotland, who were respectively responsible to the Minister of Labour and the Secretary of State for Scotland. Their functions were described as 'the initiation, organisation, prosecution and assistance of measures designed to facilitate the economic development and social improvement' of the Special Areas, and to this end a capital sum of initially two million pounds was placed at their disposal. The responsibility that was thus placed on the Commissioners was the improvisation of measures which, when they matured, would give the Special Areas a more vigorous and permanent economic life and would generally ameliorate social conditions. It was essentially a matter of introducing long term projects as opposed to temporary work for the immediate relief of unemployment. The areas that were scheduled under the Act were Tyneside and part of Durham, West Cumberland, South Wales and the Counties of Renfrewshire, Dunbartonshire and Lanarkshire, with the exception of the City of Glasgow. In 1937 the duration of the 1934 Act was extended to 31st March 1939 and the original powers of the Commissioners, which had been unduly circumscribed, were extended so as to make possible the provision of financial assistance for approved industries in Special and other areas. By the end of 1938 some sixteen million pounds had been either expended or committed on a variety of projects in the Special Areas. These included the setting up of Trading Estates, Harbour Developments, small holdings' schemes, and the erection or expansion of hospitals and welfare centres.¹

As a means of transferring unemployed men from the depressed mining areas, a scheme of industrial training similar to that which had been earlier provided for the disabled ex-servicemen was introduced. New Government training centres were opened and these were sited in areas, such as Watford and Slough, where prospects of employment were reasonably good. Courses on the lines of those given in the former instructional factories were provided in bricklaying, carpentry, furniture making, coach building, metal working and a variety of miscellaneous trades ranging from welding to hairdressing. Between 1925 and 1929 about 11,000 men were trained and passed into employment. The development of the work was, however, severely retarded during the years of the world depression. Some centres had to be closed and available places were reduced to 2,000. When trade revived, the movement once again got into its stride and in 1937 there were in all the centres places for over 7,600 trainees.

¹ Full details will be found in the published *Reports of the Commissioners for the Special Areas*: for England and Wales Cmd. 4957, 5303, 5595, and 5896, for Scotland Cmd. 4958, 5089, 5245, 5604 and 5905.

When men have been a long time unemployed and often underfed they lose both the will and the strength for hard work. Before they can begin, or still more keep, a job they need to be gradually tuned up. To help men in this plight, instructional centres were set up to which they were invited to come for courses of rehabilitation lasting from two to three months. At first the intention was to prepare and fit those who attended for work on the road schemes, which had been started as a means of lessening the volume of unemployment. Subsequently, as the employment situation worsened, men were invited to take a course without any certainty of a job to follow. The professed aim of the centres and of the camps which were formed in summer was to help men to get fit, so that when an opportunity for work did arise they would have the strength and the courage to take it. Over 20,000 in the six years preceding the war responded to this invitation.

Separate steps were taken to help unemployed women. Under a scheme, drawn up by a Central Committee appointed in 1920, centres run either by the Committee itself or by the local education authority were established in which courses lasting thirteen weeks were provided in practical housework, no doubt in the hope that the trainees would become resident domestic servants. This was a somewhat unimaginative view of what women might want and be able to do. In the result, after enquiries into the prospects of employment, grants were also made available for women to take courses, for example, in midwifery, nursery nursing and comptometer operating, or to refresh their skill as shorthand typists and clerical workers. By 1938 over 82,000 women and girls had taken the houseworkers course and nearly 2,000 had been assisted in training for other vocations.

Although these various measures for combating unemployment only touched the fringe of the problem, nevertheless within their limited compass they were a means of re-awakening hope among the workless and stiffening their morale. Without them it may well be that, when the second war made its vast demands upon the manpower of the country, among the unemployed substantial numbers might have been found to be unemployable.

(iv)

The Relationship of Employers and Workers

We shall conclude this account of the employment situation between the two wars with a survey of the steps taken to promote within industry a corporate sense of responsibility, and to provide machinery by which disputes arising out of conditions of employment could be settled without recourse to strikes or lock-outs.

As soon as fighting was over the Government started to redeem its promises to restore to industry the management of its own affairs. By

the Wages (Temporary Regulations) Act of 21st November 1918 the provisions of the Munitions of War Act that had prohibited strikes and lock-outs were repealed. Compulsory arbitration except for a few specified matters was abolished, and an Interim Court of Arbitration was set up for the adjustment of differences. To tide over the passage from war to peace the standard of wages in force at the date of the armistice was continued for six months with legally binding minimum rates, and this temporary arrangement was subsequently extended to two years. In the summer of 1919 the pre-war trade practices that had been abrogated in 1915 were with some agreed exceptions restored.

These measures marked stages in the transition from Government control of industrial affairs to their voluntary regulation by employers and workers, and a further step forward was taken under the Industrial Courts Act of November 1919. While the war was still in progress, the Government had set up a committee on the relations between employers and employed. This committee, commonly called after its chairman the Whitley Committee, had presented two reports. In the first¹ it recommended the setting up within industries of Joint Industrial Councils composed of representatives of the two sides and with functions similar to those of the pre-war Conciliation Boards, which some industries had formed to deal with questions affecting wages and conditions of employment. The Government had accepted in the autumn of 1917 the policy indicated in the Report, and the Ministry of Labour had subsequently assisted a number of industries to establish Industrial Councils. In its second report in January 1918² the Committee recommended the setting up of a Standing Arbitration Court, to which disputes that parties had failed to reconcile under their own machinery might be referred. The Committee further advised that means should be found by which an impartial enquiry could be made into the facts and circumstances of a dispute and an authoritative statement issued of its findings. The Industrial Courts Act gave statutory effect to these recommendations. A permanent Court of Arbitration called the Industrial Court was set up in place of the Interim Court, and to this the Minister of Labour was empowered with the consent of both parties to submit disputes for settlement. Provision was also made for the reference of differences at the wish of both parties to a single arbitrator or specially constituted board of arbitrators, provided that the possibilities of settling the issue under such available machinery as a joint industrial council had been exhausted. Lastly, the Act authorised the Minister of Labour, without the necessity of obtaining the consent of the disputants, to appoint a Court of Enquiry into the circumstances of any dispute whether actual or apprehended, and obliged him to lay its report before Parliament.

¹ Cd. 8606.

² Cd. 9099.

The most striking feature of this legislation, by which permanent machinery for the determination of wages and the settlement of disputes was set up, was the value attached to joint consultation within industry. Whereas in the past the right payment for a job had been regarded as primarily a matter between an individual employer and his workers, in future representatives of employers and workpeople would endeavour to set up an appropriate wage structure for the different types of employment in their industry. This changed approach had been made possible by the formation of employers' associations and trade unions to voice and protect the interests of their members. With a progressive increase in their membership these bodies acquired a growing consciousness of corporate strength and became more jealous of their rights. This development of organised power on both sides of industry was of deep and lasting significance and, when the next war came, it exercised, as we shall see, an important influence upon the determination of manpower policy.

In the intervening years between the wars many industries set up joint industrial councils, and these were instrumental in bringing employers and workers into closer and more amicable relationship with each other. It was upon these bodies that the responsibility was now placed of taking united action to settle by negotiation questions affecting conditions of employment and standards of wages and, where differences could not be so settled, to make use of the conciliation procedure that the Act of 1919 provided. In these ways a large number of disputes were in the period between the wars satisfactorily settled. On the other side of the scale must be set the prolonged stoppage of work in the coal-fields and the general strike of 1926. But, although this latter catastrophe might seem at the time to have undermined the basis on which industrial relations had been built up, in the aftermath the value of joint negotiation was enhanced by the spirit in which industries set about to repair the damage that had been done. The success with which the system of Whitley Councils weathered this storm ensured its survival as an instrument of industrial peace.

There was, however, a large number of industries in which before the First World War there was no established machinery for collective bargaining between the employers' organisations and the trade unions. In some of them where wages were exceptionally low trade boards had been set up under the provisions of the Trade Boards Act of 1909. These Boards, which were composed of representatives of the employers and workers concerned with a small independent element, were empowered to fix statutorily enforceable minimum wages for time and piece work. The limitations of this policy were challenged by the Whitley Committee in its 1917 Report.¹ It recommended that trade boards should be used to provide a regular negotiating machinery for

¹ Cd. 9002.

industries that had no recognised system of their own for dealing with standards of wages. The criterion for setting them up should be the absence of organisation and not, as hitherto, merely low wages. This statutory machinery would thus act as the foster mother, until in due course a Whitley Council could be substituted for the trade board. The amending Trade Boards Act of 1918 seemed to give legislative effect, though less specifically, to this change of viewpoint. Under it the Minister of Labour could set up by special Order a trade board for any trade, if he was of the opinion that there was no adequate machinery for wage regulation and 'having regard to the rates of wages prevailing in the trade or any part of the trade'. These conditions appeared to offer to the Minister a wider freedom of choice than he possessed under the Act of 1909. Parliamentary checks on his initiative were also relaxed. In setting up a board he did not require, as was previously necessary, the formal confirmation of Parliament; he had only to give public notice of his intention to make an Order, and in the event of objections, to hold a public enquiry. He was then free, if he still thought it necessary, to make the requisite Order.

This wider conception of the rôle of trade boards stimulated their growth, and by 1921 there were sixty-three boards in existence covering three million workers, seventy per cent. of whom were women. But the end of the post-war trade boom, with prices and employment beginning to fall, led to a widespread campaign against the Trade Boards Act, and the Government set up a committee under Viscount Cave to enquire into its operation and to consider whether any changes were necessary. This committee re-interpreted the admittedly vaguely worded powers given to the Minister in the 1918 Act. It rejected the view that these powers could be used as an instrument for the public regulation of wages, and in effect suggested a reversion to the conditions that obtained under the Act of 1909. This meant that the Minister should only be empowered to set up trade boards, when he was satisfied, first, that the rates of wages were unduly low and, secondly, that there was no adequate machinery for their effective regulation. The committee also recommended that before making such an Order the Minister should cause a public enquiry to be held, whether or not formal objections had been lodged.

Although these recommendations were never embodied in legislation, they were accepted and endorsed by the Coalition Government in a White Paper presented to Parliament in July 1922,¹ and again by the Conservative Government in 1924. But these were only statements of intention: the 1918 Act with its equivocal wording remained un-amended. The consequences were unfortunate. After 1922 the administration of trade boards policy became the shuttlecock of the two major

¹ Cmd. 1645.

political parties, with the Conservatives supporting the Cave interpretation and the Labour Party tending to maintain the original viewpoint of the Whitley Committee.

These divergent attitudes retarded progress particularly in the distributive trades, for which soon after the end of the war the Minister of Labour had decided to set up trade boards. After considerable delay, due in part to technical difficulties in defining the different sections of the distributive trades, and in part to doubt engendered by the depression of 1921 about the general usefulness of this method of determining wages, trade boards were set up only in the milk distribution and grocery trades. The former functioned satisfactorily; but the latter encountered serious differences of opinion between employers and trade unions about the number of hours that should constitute a working week and the rates of wages to be paid. These disagreements persisted, and in 1926 the Conservative Government dissolved the board and abandoned the policy advocated by the first Labour Government of setting up trade boards for other sections of the distributive trades. A similar fate attended the efforts of the second Labour Government to establish a trade board for the catering trades. Strong objections, which were taken to the Courts, were raised to the proposed Order mainly on grounds arising out of its attempted definition of the strange miscellany that constituted the catering trades, while a more general opposition was based on the alleged absence of clear evidence that the wages in the catering trades were so exceptionally low as to justify the setting up of a board. The project was abandoned when the National Government came into power. The new Administration was not, however, averse from providing machinery for determining wages where it could be proved that they were below a reasonable minimum standard. Two industries satisfied this criterion—the weaving section of the cotton industry¹ and road haulage.²

In the former economic conditions had led many employers to offer lower working conditions, and these numbers of workers were prepared to accept rather than risk the loss of their jobs. The whole structure of collective agreement in the industry was threatened with collapse and, to avoid this, the Cotton Manufacturing Industry (Temporary Provisions) Act was passed in 1934. This provided for statutory effect to be given to rates of wages agreed between representative organisations inside the industry on their joint application to the Minister of Labour for an Order; but it did not make the Minister in any way responsible for the terms of the agreements. In the Road Haulage Wages Act of 1938 provision was made for fixing statutory remuneration for road haulage workers. For those employed in connection with A and B

¹ P.E.P.: *Report on British Cotton Industry*, June 1934, pp. 87 and 89.

² *Report on the Regulation of Wages in Road Motor Transport Industry (Goods)*, May 1937 (Cmd. 5440), para. 96.

licensed vehicles, the determination of their wages was entrusted to a Central Wages Board, whose members were appointed by the Minister of Labour. The Board after consultation with Area Traffic Boards was empowered to submit its proposals to the Minister who, unless he considered it necessary to refer them back for reconsideration, was required to make an Order giving them statutory effect. In case of employees of C licensed vehicles, a different machinery was provided. Any road haulage worker in this category, or his union on his behalf, was entitled to make a complaint to the Minister of Labour that his remuneration was unfair. If such a complaint was not frivolous or was not withdrawn upon representations being made to the employer, the Minister was required to refer the matter to the Industrial Court. If the Court was satisfied that the submission was well founded, it was empowered to fix the appropriate remuneration for the employee in question, and its decision was statutorily enforceable for all other workers employed by that employer on the same work, for a period of three years following the date of the award. This procedure has a special interest because it was to become the model on which an important part of the machinery for settling wage disputes in the Second World War was constructed.

(v)

Summary

The history of employment between the two world wars is the story of an almost continuous struggle against adversity. The brief post-war boom was followed by a slump. A slow but steady recovery from this setback foundered in the world economic depression, and the journey back to prosperity was again halted in 1938 by a trade recession in the United States. These vicissitudes had important economic and psychological consequences. First, the hardest hit industries were those whose prosperity was dependent on foreign markets. In coal and cotton, engineering and shipbuilding production seriously declined in the early thirties, and unemployment was heavy and persistent. Moreover, with little apparent prospect of an early revival of trade employers gradually reduced their intake of young workers, and in the engineering and shipbuilding industries apprenticeship training virtually ceased. The consequence was a sharp decline in the number of actual and potential skilled workers. This scarcity of skill remained constant throughout the war, and the best way to overcome this impediment to expanding production was, as we shall see, one of the most difficult problems to which industry had to find an answer.

Secondly, the lack of opportunity for working, which for considerable numbers of the unemployed persisted hopelessly for many months, was

bound, despite the palliatives that were created, to weaken their morale. In September 1939 there were still a million and more unemployed men and women and, although this was not a static pool, this high aggregate continued during the first eight months of the war. It might well be wondered—had many of the unemployed perhaps lost the will and ability to work? Dunkirk was to create the necessary stimulus. From then onwards there were abundant jobs waiting to be done, and a very large number of the unemployed were found fit and willing to carry them out.

CHAPTER III

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT WAR

IN THE TWENTIES war seemed remote and hopes for prolonged peace ran high. The scale of expenditure on the Services was consistent with the doctrine that no major war was to be expected, and from 1928 the 'ten-year hypothesis'—that at any given date there would be no major war for ten years—was the accepted formula. In consequence the strength and equipment of the Services were allowed to run down. In the early thirties this comfortable belief in undisturbed peace was shaken. The Japanese occupied Manchuria and in 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany. The Government abandoned the 'ten-year hypothesis', and in the autumn of 1934 decided that in the course of the next five years the accumulated deficiencies of armaments would have to be made good. It was not, however, until the turn of 1935/36 that the first rearmament programme was approved—this coincided with Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland. From then onwards armaments began to mount, but until the winter of 1938/39 the scale was more on a peace than a war-time basis. There were two main reasons for this. First, from the strategic and diplomatic standpoint rearmament was looked upon less as a preparation for war than a reinforcement of peace. A display of apparent strength would, it was believed, act as an effective deterrent to an enemy. Secondly, so it was argued, the economy of the country was slowly recovering from the recent trade depression and the revival of exports would suffer if a large proportion of financial and economic resources was diverted to war production. Moreover, an active concentration on the output of munitions would necessitate some control over industry and for this, it was thought, the country was not yet prepared. Preparations for war should, therefore, be on a scale that would interfere as little as possible with the resuscitation of the normal economic life of the country.

The limited financial resources that were made available circumscribed the programmes which each of the three Services would on strategic grounds have liked to put into effect. While none was satisfied, the Royal Air Force had the least ground for complaint. The frequent warnings of the Air Staff about the growing threat of the Luftwaffe convinced the Government of the crucial importance of the Air Arm in any future war, and early in 1936 a scheme of genuine expansion was sanctioned, under which the Air Force was to acquire in three

years more than 8,000 new machines as compared with 3,800 in two years under the current programme. By 1938 aircraft and anti-aircraft defences were being given first claim on available resources. As compared with the Air Force, naval strength had not fallen so low and there was less leeway to be made up. During the four years preceding the outbreak of war sufficient funds were made available for a substantial renovation of ships and guns, but the cost was high and there was little money left over to pay for new construction. With this preferential treatment for the Air Force and the Navy the Army became the cinderella of the three Services, and the part which it could play in war had to be radically revised. At first it had been intended that a regular expeditionary force should be equipped to fight on the Continent and that it should be reinforced at the outbreak of the war by at least two divisions from the Territorial Army. But with the relatively small share of the available financial resources allocated to the Army the impracticability of this strategic plan became increasingly apparent. By the summer of 1937 it was decided that Great Britain could not participate in an European war with substantial land forces and that the function of the Army should be confined to the fulfilment of imperial commitments and the protection of the country against aerial attack. This doctrine of what was known as 'a war of limited liabilities' was accepted policy throughout 1938, and it was not till Hitler's occupation of Prague in the spring of 1939 that it was perforce abandoned, and plans for raising and equipping a Continental army were revived and put into effective operation.¹

Amid these fluctuations of policy and the slow conversion of the Government to the probability of war it was not surprising that no quantitative assessment was made of the labour that would be required to carry out the rearmament programme. As far as the Armed Forces were concerned there should, it was felt, be little difficulty in obtaining the necessary recruits, and where men had to be withdrawn from industry they could be replaced from amongst the million and more unemployed. Only with regard to the adequacy of the supply of skilled labour in the engineering industry were there serious apprehensions. Some of the skilled men after a period of unemployment had drifted away to other industries and, although the intake of apprentices which had virtually stopped in the early thirties had again revived, six years training was necessary before they could qualify as trained craftsmen. The principles on which the problem should be tackled were adumbrated by the Ministry of Labour in a memorandum in 1936. There were two essentials. First, the practice of placing large orders with firms of limited capacity should cease and the contracting departments should endeavour to spread their contracts in areas where there was a

¹ See further M. M. Postan: *British War Production*, pp. 14-34.

sufficiency of manpower and materials. Secondly, the fullest use must be made of the existing skilled workers and, where they were in short supply, the normal processes of production should be adjusted so as to permit of the employment of less skilled men on some jobs hitherto reserved for the craftsman. The Government should, therefore, explain the situation to both sides of the engineering industry and invite their co-operation. These proposals were formally approved, but there were difficulties in putting them into operation. In placing their contracts supply departments were more influenced by their experience of the efficiency of different firms than by manpower considerations which the Ministry of Labour pressed upon their attention, while the negotiations between the Government and the engineering industry and within the industry itself were slow in bearing fruit. The chief difficulty was the acceptance of the principle of dilution, and it was not until August 1939 that a Relaxation of Customs Agreement was signed.

(i)

Manpower Planning down to 1938

Although the prospect of a Second World War was not seriously entertained by the British Government until a short time before its actual outbreak, nevertheless as early as 1922 on the advice of the Committee of Imperial Defence it was decided that, while recent experiences in organising the manpower and resources of the country were still fresh memories, plans for meeting a similar emergency should be prepared. Accordingly, two Sub-Committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence, composed of officials who had had a personal knowledge of war-time administration, were set up to make recommendations about manpower and supplies respectively.¹ Among the schemes that emerged was one for national mobilisation in the event of a major war. At the time it was produced² it was regarded as little more than an academic exercise; nevertheless it has a special interest and relevance to a study of war-time administration, because with few modifications it was the basis on which from May 1940 onwards the manpower of the country was in fact mobilised.

The Sub-Committee dealing with manpower was under the chairmanship of Sir W. Graham Greene, and in July 1922 it presented its report to the Committee of Imperial Defence. As the major recommendations which it contained became the principles on which detailed planning was subsequently based, it will make for clarity if

¹ These were the Sub-Committees on National Service in a Future War and on the Supply of Munitions and Armaments in a Future War.

² See below pp. 43-46.

they are separately summarised according as they related to recruiting for the Forces, the organisation of civilian manpower or the machinery of Government control.

The Sub-Committee prefaced its findings by laying down two things which in its judgement were essential to the satisfactory working of any scheme of National Service. These were a good system of national registration and a carefully considered list of occupations of national importance. Without the former no reliable estimate could be made of the size of armed forces that it would be practicable to raise; and without the latter, as the last war had shown, a just balance between the claims of the Services and industry for skilled workers could not be struck and maintained. Arrangements should, accordingly, be made in peace for compiling a national register as soon as war broke out, and for preparing a schedule of industries and occupations with effective safeguards against enlistment in time of war for the men employed in them.

The methods by which recruiting should be carried out would differ according to the character of the war. For a minor war, in which not more than 750,000 recruits would be required, the voluntary system would be adequate. Even in a war of this scale, however, there would be a heavy demand for skilled labour for the production of guns and equipment. No man, therefore, over a certain age employed in any of the industries or occupations in the proposed schedule should be allowed to enlist.

For a major war the Sub-Committee recommended that conscription for all men of military age should be introduced as soon as practicable after the outbreak of war. The call-up should be by age classes with protection for men in scheduled occupations. This should be done in two ways. Whole groups of men required for work in essential industries might be 'relegated'—that is, deemed to belong—to an older age class and so be called up later than their contemporaries; and, secondly, individuals might on grounds of personal hardship be granted by tribunals postponement of their call-up. In either case the obligation to perform military service would only be put back and, apart from conscientious objectors and ministers of religion, no exemptions would be granted to men of military age. In this way the principle of universal liability for military service would be maintained.

On the methods by which civilian labour should be distributed and controlled the Sub-Committee was much less specific. It recommended that a substitution scheme should be worked out by which, as soon as National Service received Parliamentary sanction, fit skilled men in essential industries could be replaced by skilled men from less important undertakings; and men, wherever practicable, by women. Otherwise the Committee did little more than call attention to problems such as strikes, wages and trade union restrictions where, on the

analogy of the past war, government intervention might prove to be necessary, and to the need for an effective control of prices and profits.

The Sub-Committee was emphatic that responsibility for the administration of National Service in a major war and for the promotion of plans to ensure the best use of manpower should rest with a single authority. Recognising the disadvantages of multiplying ministries it reviewed the possibilities of entrusting these duties to an existing department, and the Ministry of Labour was thought to be the obvious choice. That department, however, indicated that it would decline the offer, if made, on the grounds that the administration of a scheme of National Service was incompatible with its rôle of adviser to the Government on labour questions and with industrial conciliation where an impartial attitude was essential if the confidence of the trade unions were not to be forfeited. The Sub-Committee apparently found these reasons convincing for it recommended, albeit with some reluctance, that a new Ministry, to be called as in the past war the Ministry of National Service, should be instituted. On it would rest the responsibility of determining all questions of policy affecting the use of manpower, and of administering and operating through local National Service offices the necessary machinery for recruitment to the Services and the distribution of workers in industry.

The report, it will be seen, provided in broad outline a scheme for National Service in a future war. Its recommendations, while comprehensive, were general in character. The next step was to build on these foundations detailed and practical plans. This task was referred by the Committee of Imperial Defence to a standing inter-departmental committee, which came to be known as the Manpower Sub-Committee.

The next years were spent in clarifying some of the issues raised in the report. Two modifications in the recruiting machinery that were accepted by the Cabinet deserve notice. In place of the 'relegation' plan, which was open to a number of administrative objections, a scheme of protection or reservation for skilled workers was adopted. Under it an age would be fixed in each occupation in the Schedule below which men would be able to enlist and above which they would be protected or reserved in their civilian employment. Secondly, as the National Register—upon which the use of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was then regarded as dependent—would not be available in the first six months of the war, it was decided as a way out of the difficulty that no man under twenty-five years of age in an occupation in the Schedule would, if he were in Grade I medical category, be protected from call-up but that those in lower medical categories would be reserved. It was further proposed that in the first six months of the war recruiting would be confined to men under twenty-five, and and in the second half year to men between twenty-five and twenty-nine who were not in reserved occupations. This division of the

recruiting field at twenty-five became known as the 'clean cut', and it was estimated that in the first six months it would yield one and a half million men and an additional half million in the second half of the year. This total would be more than sufficient to meet the Services' estimated demands as presented in the summer of July 1925. Later in the same year these figures were scaled up and the estimate of the number of skilled tradesmen said to be required reached fantastic heights and would, if accepted, have crippled productive industry. This called for a long and patient examination by the Ministry of Labour of the types of tradesmen which the Service departments, with little knowledge of skilled occupations in civilian life, vaguely classified as skilled. In the result the requirements of the Services were by mutual agreement reduced to a figure that could be satisfactorily met by the 'clean cut'.

On the civilian side, a paper was presented in 1927 by the Ministry of Labour in which the Manpower Sub-Committee was invited to affirm that compulsory national service involved the power not only to call up men for military service but to transfer those reserved from military service to civil employment of national importance. This would mean that from the outset of the war the Government must be armed with the necessary authority. Secondly, the Ministry emphasised the dependence of a successful control of manpower upon an equally effective control of prices and profits. Lastly, it suggested that the functions of the Ministry of National Service and the Ministry of Labour should be defined so as to make clear that, while the former would be responsible for all questions of substitution and dilution, the latter should handle industrial disputes, provide machinery for the adjustment of wages, and generally act as adviser to other departments on labour matters. These principles were affirmed by the Manpower Sub-Committee.

The next significant year in this story was 1935, when the Committee of Imperial Defence was pressing for the completion of plans in anticipation of an early European war. The Ministry of Labour submitted two memoranda designed to meet two dissimilar emergencies. The first was entitled 'Manpower in a Major War'; the second contained proposals for dealing with the manpower requirements of a minor war.

Before describing the main proposals contained in what for convenience may be called 'the big scheme' it is important to make clear the assumptions upon which it was based. A major war was visualised as one in which from the start the whole resources of the nation would be required to carry it through to a successful conclusion. On the political plane this presupposed 'a general recognition of the issue before the country, popular support for the Government, and a Government strong enough and decisive enough to make use of this popular support and to introduce the essential measures while popular

feeling is active and single-minded. As the plan touches the whole economic life of the country a conscious effort to produce this atmosphere must be regarded as the first duty of those who may be called upon to put it into effect'. For a major war under modern conditions, it was further argued, it would not be safe to rely on the ultimate possession of superior power. It would be essential from the very beginning to concentrate the whole resources of the country on the prosecution of the war, with a balanced allocation of manpower between the Forces and essential industry. The last war had shown how difficult it was to re-introduce stability if one or more of the factors moved seriously out of alignment. Therefore it was necessary to maintain control over manpower under unified direction. 'To divide this control whether for the Forces or for the manufacture of war supplies or for the maintenance of the necessary civilian life of the country would be to repeat a grievous error.'

The pivot of the whole scheme was thus a newly constituted Ministry of National Service which was to be under a Minister of Cabinet rank. His headquarters would be organised in two departments, one of which would be responsible for recruitment, the other for the supply of labour to essential industries. For the efficient execution of policy the new Ministry would take over from the Ministry of Labour its divisional offices and employment exchanges and devolve upon them as many functions as possible. It might be necessary to increase the number of divisional offices from seven to perhaps ten, and it was suggested that each of them should be under a Divisional Commissioner who should be a person of recognised standing in the area and who would have under him a Controller of Recruitment, a Controller of Civilian Labour (the present Ministry of Labour Divisional Controller), a Divisional Registration Officer and a Divisional Medical Officer. Similarly, the employment exchanges with their knowledge of local employment conditions and their experience in handling employers and workers could be readily expanded, as going concerns, to take over the additional duties in connection with the machinery of recruitment and the compilation of statistics. Lastly, to guide them in their work a Priority Committee consisting of representatives of the interested Ministries should be set up to determine broadly the numbers to be allocated between the Forces and industry.

On the methods by which recruits should be obtained for the Forces the scheme developed ideas which had already been accepted in principle. At the outbreak of war or soon afterwards legislation should be passed placing a liability for military service on all males between eighteen and forty-one. The Act would confer no statutory exemptions upon any class except ministers of religion, but would contain a right of appeal to an appeals tribunal on grounds of conscience or personal hardship. The tribunals would have no power to grant postponement

on occupational grounds; this would rest entirely with the Minister. The determination of which classes of men should be reserved would be based on the National Register and the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, and in the interim period before this system was in full operation call-up would be carried out by means of the 'clean cut'.

It was in the control and supply of labour for civilian work that the scheme embodied novel and controversial proposals. In 'controlled' establishments—which as defined roughly covered undertakings in all essential industries and services—employers should be prohibited by Regulation from engaging any male labour over the age of sixteen otherwise than through a National Service local office (i.e. an employment exchange), and workers should be prohibited from transferring from one type of employment to another except with the permission of a National Service officer. Men in reserved occupations would be granted postponement of military service only if they were ready to take employment on war work, although this would not oblige them to go to a named employer. Failure to comply with this undertaking would lead to cancellation of postponement. By these means it was hoped to check an indiscriminate movement of workers which in the recent war had proved a serious embarrassment.

Without some control of wages, which in turn was dependent upon a control of prices and profits, control of labour, it was next argued, would soon break down. The scheme, therefore, proposed that all general changes in wages where large numbers of industrial workers were affected should be made by periodical adjustments by an independent tribunal such as the Industrial Court. Such questions would be referred to the tribunal by the Minister of Labour after the ordinary means of reaching a settlement by voluntary negotiation had been tried and failed. Lesser wage questions, which might not need to be submitted to the tribunal, should be considered by a statutory inter-departmental committee under the chairmanship of the Minister of Labour.

It was further of first importance that production should not be interrupted by labour disputes, which frequently arise from dissatisfaction with wages. To declare strikes and lockouts illegal was not found in the First World War to be an effective deterrent. In the end, it was argued, the scale on which stoppages occurred would depend not upon statutory prohibitions but upon the fairness and impartiality with which the conciliation officers of the Ministry of Labour handled the issues at stake. This was an additional reason for dissociating responsibility for handling labour disputes from the Ministry of National Service or the Supply organisations, whose actions might on occasions give rise to industrial unrest.

The outstanding merit of this major scheme was that it was conceived as a single plan, each part of which interlocked with the others.

As an exercise in planning it was comprehensive in scope, balanced and discriminating. Its conclusions for the most part at any rate followed logically from the premises, and the lessons of the previous war had been digested and persuasively interpreted. It is when the scheme is considered as a practical plan to be put into operation *in toto* at the outset of a major war that doubts arise. And here it is not so much the proposals as the assumptions upon which they are based that are open to attack. To anticipate that at the critical juncture a Government would be found in office commanding such respect and endowed with such energy and determination that it could win from the country an immediate acceptance of a series of measures impinging to an unprecedented degree upon some of the most cherished liberties was surely, especially at the time it was suggested, mere wishful thinking. British public opinion does not respond sympathetically to decisions the necessity for which it has not been schooled to understand. Then too, in the proposals for the control of labour and wages the acquiescence of organised labour was tacitly assumed; there was insufficient regard for the growth of trade unionism since the end of the war and its critical attitude towards measures which might be construed as sacrificing the interests of the workers to the advantage of the employers rather than the good of the State. Nevertheless, although the plan which was actually put into operation in 1939 was a well-watered version of the original, it was this scheme or at least its essentials that after Dunkirk was the basis on which the manpower of the country was fully mobilised. By then the assumptions that lay behind it in 1935 had become facts which everyone could recognise.

The smaller scheme, which was submitted simultaneously to the Manpower Sub-Committee, was designed for a minor war which would only later, if ever, develop into a conflict involving the whole manpower of the country. The methods by which the Forces and industry would get the men they needed were simple and innocuous. There would be no call at the outbreak of war for compulsory military service or for effective labour controls. Voluntaryism, operating in close relation with the Schedule of Reserved Occupations and acting under the guidance of an effective Priority Committee, would give the Forces and industry both the number and types of men they required. For the carrying-out of the plan the existing machinery would amply suffice, the Service departments looking after recruiting and the Ministry of Labour through its employment exchanges attending to labour supply. The scheme was never put to the test; but it may be doubted, if it had been, whether its promoters might not have found their easy confidence misplaced.

In dealing with industrial relations, however, the authors made a valuable contribution in which there was an implied criticism of some of the views put forward in the 'bigger' scheme. In the temper that war

generates, it was wisely remarked, any local difficulties, if badly handled, may start a general strike. The Ministry of Labour should, therefore, be recognised as a general adviser to the Supply organisations on the attitude of labour. It was well qualified for this rôle and, through reports which it could obtain from its local conciliation officers, it was in a position to suggest the appropriate action to be taken in particular cases. The question of the control of wages, the scheme continued, should be approached with the utmost caution. It was impracticable at the outset of war to apply a rigid control to prices and profits, and without this workers would not accept an imposed regulation of their wages. It would be better to leave it to the supply departments to exercise a control over the movement of wages through the powers that they possessed to regulate the terms of their contracts. The most effective way of preventing an employer from raising wages above the normal scale was to make it clear to him that he did so at his own cost.

The two schemes were not discussed by the Manpower Sub-Committee till December 1936. It was then decided to refer the question of wage control, on which there was considerable difference of opinion on the Committee, to a Sub-Committee on Wages in Controlled Establishments and Departmental Responsibility for Dilution of Labour—a rich resounding title. A series of meetings were held through most of 1937, at which it was persistently argued by the Ministry of Labour that, unless some means could be found of checking profits and prices, it was useless to talk of wage regulation. In particular the Ministry criticised the failure of the Government to unify its Supply organisation. The departments catering for the three Services had been left free to compete against each other for productive capacity and labour, and under these conditions it was very difficult to achieve an effective control over the pricing of contracts and payments to industry. Without further delay the whole munitions programme should be made the responsibility of a single Supply Ministry.

On the assumption that this unification would take place, the Sub-Committee in November 1937 recommended that in the early stages of the war the question of wage increases should be left to be negotiated through the existing industrial machinery. At a later date some measure of compulsion might become necessary, but to make even conditional provision for it by statute from the start was calculated to provoke labour mistrust and hostility. The responsibilities of the different Ministries in relation to the control of labour followed logically from this principle. The Labour Department of the Ministry of Supply would have the duty of ensuring by its control over contracts that the wage rates negotiated by the two sides of industry were properly observed. On the question of dilution it would be for the Ministry of National Service, as the department responsible for the allocation of labour, to decide where and to what extent its introduction was

desirable. The wage issues would then be determined through the negotiating machinery of the industry concerned, and action to put dilution into effect would be the responsibility of the Ministry of Supply as the department in closest touch with the technical problems of management. Finally, the Ministry of Labour would be available in the rôle of conciliator and arbitrator and would play the part of general adviser to Government departments and industry on all questions affecting labour relations.

This report, which on wage questions favoured the recommendations in the smaller rather than those in the larger of the two schemes before the Manpower Sub-Committee, did good service in its valiant attempt to determine the lines of demarcation between the different Ministries with an interest in manpower. What were perhaps the most contentious parts of the bigger scheme had now been modified and it might be thought that final agreement on its remaining recommendations would shortly have been reached. But while the question of wages was being considered in committee, developments were taking place outside which threw the draft plans into the melting pot.

In the early spring of 1937 a new competitor for manpower appeared in the shape of the A.R.P. Department of the Home Office with demands for over a million recruits to be trained while peace still lasted in anticipation of a full scale air attack on the country at the outbreak of war. In May a new strategic assumption was adopted by the Government. The war for which plans should now be prepared was what was called 'a war of limited liability', in which the rôle of the Army would be confined to defence, and fewer men would be required. Consequently instead of two millions only 800,000 recruits would have to be found for the fighting services as a whole during the first twelve months, and 270,000 at the beginning of the war. On the other hand, the smaller forces in the Army would have to be equipped with the most up-to-date guns and weapons, and fully as many skilled workers would be required by the engineering industry. This new situation necessitated the re-opening of questions already settled and raised others that were new. If only 800,000 recruits were required in the first year was conscription any longer necessary? Should the 'clean cut' be abandoned, and if so should the Schedule of Reserved Occupations be revised so as to protect the younger skilled workers? Should there be any control over volunteering for A.R.P. or any attempt made to regulate the flow of volunteers between A.R.P. and the Territorial Army?

It was clear that no quick and satisfactory answers could be found to these and other cognate problems, and apart from a decision in the summer of 1937 to extend the Schedule of Reserved Occupations into the field hitherto covered by the 'clean cut'—an onerous task which took a year to complete—little progress was made. The introduction of

any real control of voluntary recruiting was strenuously opposed by the War Office and the A.R.P. Department, as it would frustrate their efforts to get recruits. Moreover, the two competitors found great difficulty in coming to any agreement for sorting out recruits that would limit the field from which each might accept volunteers. Industrial firms, too, were complaining of the incompatibility of appeals for volunteers for war-time service from among their workers with the maintenance of full production of war munitions, and they received little comfort or help from the evasive replies to their letters. What was clearly required was an authoritative statement explaining the purposes for which volunteers were required and giving some guidance on the most appropriate ways in which individuals might offer their services. But the Government showed no disposition to take the public into its confidence and to disclose the plans it was making against the eventuality of war. Without a strong lead it was hardly to be expected that the public would take propaganda very seriously, and in June 1938 in the London Area alone the A.R.P. first line services were still short of 60,000 personnel. It was not till after Munich that a solution was found or rather dictated by an outraged public opinion.

The reluctance of the Government to give any firm lead on policy further handicapped officials in their deliberations on how to adapt manpower plans to meet the new strategic concept of the future war. Their troubles were increased by a decision of the Government not to set up a single Ministry of Supply to control contracts and war supplies. A further obstacle to progress was the multiplication of committees each dealing with some separate aspect of the manpower problem. To rectify this lack of co-ordination it was eventually decided in January 1938 to establish a new Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower and to instruct it 'to reconsider, in the light of the present war plans of the departments, the measures to be taken both on the outbreak of a major war and in making preparations for it to secure the most effective use of the manpower of the country'.

In the autumn of 1938 the Sub-Committee submitted its report. In general the new scheme was modelled on the bigger of the two schemes submitted in 1936, and it will be sufficient to indicate why despite the new strategic assumption some of its provisions were retained and where modifications were made.

Although the requirements of the Forces were reduced by over fifty per cent. the report came down strongly in favour of compulsory military service because without it there was no practical way of ensuring that from the start men were put in their right places. Should this be found politically inexpedient, then the Schedule of Reserved Occupations could be used as a check on indiscriminate volunteering, but it was emphasised there could be no guarantee that this control would be effective. A compulsory system controlled by a Ministry of

National Service with a general responsibility for manpower was, despite all the advantages that might be urged in favour of volunteering, in the end the fairer and more satisfactory method of recruitment. In the call-up it would no longer be necessary to operate the 'clean cut' as that process would yield more men than were required. It would rather be desirable to ensure that more of the younger men who had recently completed their apprenticeships were retained in industry; the best method of doing this should be worked out on the basis of the revised Schedule which the Ministry of Labour had recently drawn up.

With regard to the control of civilian labour the report retained in substantially the same form the provision made in the earlier scheme for the compulsory filling of vacancies through the local offices of the Ministry of National Service. To this it joined two further (and not very happy) proposals. The Minister should be given power to start a Scheme of War Work Volunteers on similar lines to the Munitions Volunteer Scheme of the previous war, so as to draw craftsmen from work of less importance to employment directly connected with the war effort. Should this not achieve its purpose, then the Minister should be authorised at his discretion to require an employer to discharge workers. The Committee recognised that these and some of its other proposals were likely to be contentious and recommended that, before the necessary Bill was drafted, the two sides of industry should be brought into consultation.

With regard to dilution, wages and disputes the Sub-Committee adopted substantially the recommendations of the Wages Sub-Committee in its report of the previous November.¹ These, it will be remembered, were made on the assumption that there would be a single Ministry of Supply. The ill effects of not proceeding with this unification were strongly presented in the latest report and Ministers were invited to reconsider their decision. Lastly, the report pointed out, since the Ministry of Labour had made a special census of skilled workers in important industries upon which the revised Schedule of Reserved Occupations was based, there was no longer from the manpower point of view any pressing need for a National Register. As the Government had also recently decided that it could not be drawn up in peace-time, it was doubtful whether to start the work after war had been declared would yield results of sufficient reliability to justify the expense and energy that it would entail.

In this report the Government was asked three fundamental questions. Was it prepared in the event of war to introduce legislation: (1) to set up a Ministry of National Service? (2) to place a liability for military service on all males of military age? (3) to control the engagement of workers in civilian employment? To these questions was added

¹ See above p. 47.

a request that the Government should reconsider its decision about a Ministry of Supply.

(ii)

Munich to the Outbreak of War

The Munich crisis sensibly quickened the tempo of plans and preparations for war. War had been postponed but it had not been averted. Sooner or later the danger would revive and to repel it the full resources of the country would have to be mobilised. Against this eventuality what preparations was the Government making? Letters to the Press and questions in Parliament showed a widespread suspicion that there were no plans either for recruiting for the Forces and Defence Services while peace still lasted, or for mobilising the manpower of the nation should war be declared. If such plans did exist, then the country should be told what they were, and the machinery for their implementation should be explained and put as required into immediate operation. These expressions of dismayed concern were accompanied by positive offers of service. During the crisis weeks over half a million enrolled in the A.R.P. services, and from the professional and scientific world so many offers of help were received that the Ministry of Labour was obliged to set up a special department—the future Central Register¹—to record the names and qualifications of the applicants. Public opinion was thus forcing the Government to more decisive action.

The Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower resumed its discussions and in the middle of October reached a number of important decisions. It was generally agreed that full advantage should be taken of the present eagerness to volunteer to fill the gaps in the Fighting Services and in Civil Defence. At the same time it was no less important to make it clear that men engaged in skilled occupations would serve their country best by remaining at their work, which in war would be arduous and no less dangerous than combatant service. What was required was a Handbook on National Service which would explain what types of people were wanted for particular services and set out at least the principles upon which the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was compiled. It should be edited by the Ministry of Labour with a foreword from the Prime Minister and distributed as widely and quickly as possible. Offers of service from persons with professional or scientific qualifications should be classified by the Ministry of Labour in a Central Register, and other departments should notify to that Ministry their probable requirements for additional specialists in the first year of war.

¹ See Chapter XIX.

At the end of the month the Government decided to give a Cabinet Minister the responsibility for all branches of Civil Defence and for schemes of national volunteering, and Sir John Anderson (later Lord Waverley) was for this purpose appointed Lord Privy Seal. The choice was fortunate. The new Minister had drive, determination, and judgement and these qualities both then and in later years were reflected in the prudence and promptness with which decisions were taken. The recommendations of the Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower were submitted to the Cabinet with the important additional proposal that a revised edition of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations should be published. Without public knowledge of what it contained volunteering could not be controlled and to wait until both sides of industry had been consulted would be to miss the opportune moment for launching the appeal. Public enthusiasm was already cooling and passing into irritation at the apparent inaction of the Government. Speed was the essential condition of success. The Cabinet was convinced and on 30th November it approved the recommendations. The next day the Lord Privy Seal described to the House of Commons his plans for a great national campaign for volunteers, to build up without recourse to conscription all the Defence Services to their required strength. The general welcome accorded to his speech was an expression of the anxiety that the September crisis had aroused.¹

In January 1939 the Handbook was distributed house by house throughout the country. It contained full information about the different services, whether combatant or civil, and the number of recruits they severally required. It indicated duties for which young and active volunteers were essential and those which older men or women could competently carry out. It also gave a clear caution that skilled workers in scheduled occupations would not be enrolled except for corresponding Service trades and A.R.P. duties in the establishments in which they were employed. The Handbook was thus designed to check impulsiveness and to help those who were free and willing to volunteer to select the service for which they were most wanted and most suitable.

The campaign was launched with a broadcast by the Prime Minister on 23rd January, and a rally the next day in the Albert Hall. In the following month National Service Committees consisting of representatives of the different recruiting services, employers and workers were set up by the Ministry of Labour in county and county borough areas. Their main functions were to arouse public interest by meetings and other forms of publicity, to explain the opportunities for service set out in the Handbook and the implications of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, and to arrange for impartial advice to be given

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 342, Col. 597-602, 1st December 1938.

to enquirers about the kind of national service they could best undertake. Recruiting offices were set up and run by the different Services, and officers of the employment exchanges, who were available to attend when required, were given the responsibility of applying the test of the Schedule to volunteers.¹ By mid-summer it was clear that the campaign had served its purpose with success. In the five months since its inception over 300,000 recruits had enlisted for the Armed Forces and 1½ millions had been enrolled in the different branches of the Civil Defence Services. At the beginning of August it was, therefore, decided to end the national campaign and to leave it to the departments concerned to continue such propaganda as they might find necessary to attract additional volunteers to the services for which they were responsible.

The success of the campaign had demonstrated the practicability of organising volunteering in peace on an orderly basis and the value of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations in deterring skilled workers from leaving their occupations except for enrolment in their corresponding Service trades. This policy of reservation did not however pass unchallenged. The Government had recently come to the decision that the Territorial Army should be increased by a quarter of a million. Faced with the responsibility of securing these recruits from men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-eight, the War Office complained that the application of the Schedule reduced its field of recruitment to impossibly small dimensions and created the impression that only second-rate men joined the Territorials. The first of these arguments was demonstrably untrue and the second was psychologically of questionable validity. To assist recruitment, however, it was decided in April 1939 on the suggestion of the Ministry of Labour to abandon reservation in a large number of occupations in the Schedule as an interim measure. This would have the effect of increasing the number of potential recruits by 630,000, and if one in nine from the enlarged field volunteered for the Territorials the additional quarter of a million would be forthcoming. This modification in the Schedule was but one of many changes made during these months to meet changing conditions. In the light of the future perhaps the most significant concession was that made to the Air Ministry. With the exception of workers in a small number of vitally important occupations it was agreed that the restrictions in the Schedule should not apply to men volunteering for aircraft crews.

Having completed its arrangements for building up the Armed Forces and Civil Defence Services on a voluntary basis the Government turned its attention to war-time planning. Two administrative changes were made early in 1939 with a view to bringing Ministers

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946, (Cmd. 7225), Chapter II.*

more closely into touch with manpower problems. The Manpower Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was replaced by a Ministerial Sub-Committee to be known as the Manpower Policy Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. W. S. Morrison, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and its Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower was reconstituted as the Manpower Technical Sub-Committee under the same chairmanship. The terms of reference of the former were to deal with all questions affecting manpower in a future war, while the latter was to keep under review the measures necessary for the control of manpower in war and to report to the Policy Sub-Committee. These changes may seem nominal, but the raising to Ministerial status of the two Sub-Committees was an acknowledgement of the greater imminence of the dangers besetting the country and of the need for more vigorous and speedy preparations to meet the contingency of war.

It was not long till a decision of outstanding importance was taken. Following Hitler's occupation of Prague the conception of a war of 'limited liabilities' was abandoned and plans were laid for providing an army to fight on the Continent. The manpower requirements of the Services were accordingly reassessed, and the total was now put at 1,330,000, over half a million above the earlier estimate of 800,000. Although there would be no difficulty in obtaining this number if conscription, as already intended, was introduced as soon as possible after the outbreak of war, it would be some months before the raw material could be converted into trained fighters. With these considerations in mind the Government decided to introduce in peace-time a measure of compulsory training in the Armed Forces for men between the ages of twenty and twenty-one, and to place the responsibility for their call-up upon a civilian department—the Ministry of Labour. This was announced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on 26th April 1939 and a month later statutory effect was given to the decision.¹

The Military Training Act, which was to continue in force for three years, placed a liability on all males who were at the time between the ages of twenty and twenty-one and those who subsequently reached the age of twenty to four years' military service with a continuous period of six months full time training with the Forces within a year of the date of their registration. The longer the war was postponed, the greater would be the number of trained men immediately available for call-up on the outbreak of war. But in these encouraging calculations the interests of essential industries had been temporarily forgotten. If all trained men were without exception to be called up by what was in effect a return to the abandoned principle of the 'clean cut', the carefully laid plans for reserving skilled workers would be undone. It was,

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 346, Col. 1150-1153.

accordingly, decided that the Schedule of Reserved Occupations should be applied to all men as soon as they had completed their six months' training. They would then be classified as available either for general service or as Service tradesmen only, or as not immediately available in any capacity for the Forces. This decision, which in the light of events has little more than an academic interest, was nevertheless significant as showing the increasing consciousness of the necessity for maintaining from the outset of a major war a just balance between the claims of the Forces and industry.

On 3rd June the first and the only group registration of men between the ages of twenty and twenty-one took place. Immediately after the outbreak of war the Military Training Act was superseded by the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, which passed through all its stages and received the Royal Assent on 3rd September.¹ Following the precedent of the Military Training Act, the new Act was confined to Great Britain and Northern Ireland and was excluded from its scope. The provisions in the Act were in all essentials identical with those envisaged in the plan submitted in 1936. Authority was given for Royal Proclamations imposing a liability for service with the Armed Forces on men in any age group between eighteen and forty-one. This obligation applied generally to all male British subjects resident in the Country at the date at which the Proclamation relating to their age group was made, or who subsequently entered the country. British subjects not ordinarily resident in Great Britain were not liable to be called up until they had been in Great Britain for at least two years and not at all so long as they were in this country only for a temporary purpose.² Apart from ministers of religion no classes were statutorily exempted in virtue of their occupations, but provision was made for the registration of conscientious objectors and the postponement of the call-up of individuals on grounds of exceptional personal hardship. Lastly, after their period of service men were given, as they had been under the Military Training Act, the right of reinstatement with their previous employers, who were obliged to take back applicants unless it could be shown that changed circumstances had made this no longer reasonable or practicable. On the same day as this Act was passed the war-time Schedule of Reserved Occupations came into operation. It

¹ 3 & 4 Geo. 6 c. 22.

² The Defence (National Service) Regulations (S.R. & O. 1944, No. 67) made on 20th January 1944 extended liability for service to certain persons not ordinarily resident in Great Britain, provided that they had been resident in this country during a continuous period of three months. The Regulations covered nationals or citizens of, or persons born or domiciled in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, the Isle of Man, Channel Islands, or any colony, protectorate or mandated territory under the Crown. The Regulations did not apply to citizens of Northern Ireland or of Eire, and men from these countries were not called upon to register if they had been resident in Great Britain for less than two years, or had come to this country since the outbreak of war and were engaged on work of national importance and intended to return home at or before the end of the war.

differed from the peace-time version chiefly in the principles governing its application. Whereas under the peace-time Schedule men were eligible to join the national defence services in their trade capacity irrespective of age, under the war-time Schedule men at or above the age specified for each occupation were in general ineligible for acceptance in any capacity in the Armed Forces or for full-time civil defence work. Moreover, while men in certain prescribed occupations might be accepted for service only in their trade capacity, this was made dependent upon the number of men below the reservation age not being in excess of the number required as Service tradesmen. These differences between the two Schedules once again emphasised the importance that was rightly attached to removing foreseeable obstacles to the production of munitions of war.

In the months following the Munich crisis the Ministry of Labour had taken on responsibilities which were outside its normal activities. In the National Service Campaign it had edited and arranged for the distribution of the Handbook. Its officers in the employment exchanges had been called upon to determine, in accordance with the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, whether volunteers applying to join one of the combatant or civilian services should be accepted or told that they would be serving their country best by staying at their work. It had set up a special department to deal with offers of service from men with professional and scientific qualifications and had opened a Central Register in which their particulars were recorded. Even more significantly as the result of a definite policy decision it was at the local offices of the Ministry that the only registration under the Military Training Act took place. The Ministry had thus assumed National Service functions largely because, in its divisional and local offices, it had ready to hand the necessary administrative machinery. In these changed circumstances the need for setting up a new and separate Ministry of National Service on the outbreak of war was challenged. Might it not be simpler to make use of the Ministry of Labour which was already performing some of the duties of a National Service department?

It will be remembered that earlier the Ministry of Labour had resolutely opposed such a suggestion on the ground that it would jeopardise its work of industrial conciliation and interfere with the rôle for which it had cast itself of impartial adviser to the Government on labour affairs. In the course, however, of trying to frame a constitution for a Ministry of National Service other considerations arose. To hand over the employment exchanges to the new Ministry for all National Service purposes and at the same time to retain them under the Ministry of Labour for the continuing exercise of its duties in connection with unemployment insurance involved all the disadvantages of dual control. Further, if the Ministry of Labour was to surrender to

all intents and purposes its provincial organisation it would become a mere shadow of its former self. These considerations may well have prompted the thought that the alleged incompatibility of National Service functions and industrial conciliation had been perhaps just a little overplayed! The constitution was, accordingly, drafted in such a way that it could be adapted to either alternative, a new Ministry or an expanded Ministry of Labour. Apart from detailed changes, such as an increase of the number of divisional offices to twelve, it differed in one important respect from the earlier plan. The proposal to place divisional offices under Divisional Commissioners of National Service was dropped, mainly on the ground that their duties and responsibilities might conflict with those of the Regional Commissioners of Civil Defence who had been appointed after Munich and entrusted with wide discretionary powers in the event of air-raids disrupting the normal communications between London and the Provinces. A further consideration may well have been that a divisional office required at short notice to take on new functions would operate more smoothly and efficiently under the Ministry of Labour Controller who was already in post and familiar with the administrative machinery.

On 1st August it was finally settled that the Ministry of Labour should become the department responsible in the event of war for the control of the use of manpower. On 8th September statutory effect was given to this decision and the Ministry of Labour became the Ministry of Labour and National Service.¹ There can be little doubt that this was a wise choice. What is surprising is that the alternative proposition should have for so long held the field. Whatever advantages might be assumed in a Ministry of Labour left free to devote itself to the preservation of industrial peace, it was surely unrealistic to suppose that a new Ministry, not even to be instituted till war had begun, could so quickly get into its stride that it could handle efficiently the many problems that would immediately arise out of the scheme of National Service that was to be put into operation without delay.

Shortly before the outbreak of war the Government reversed its previous decision not to proceed with the unification of supply departments, and the Ministry of Supply was established.² The powers given to the new Ministry were, however, not as comprehensive as the manpower planners had advocated. While they embraced the control of supplies and contracts for the Army and of most raw materials for munitions production, the industrial requirements of the Navy and the Air Force were to remain the responsibility of the Admiralty and the Air Ministry respectively. The decision reached was, therefore, in the nature of a compromise, and like all compromises failed to satisfy all

¹ Ministry of National Service Order, 1939, S.R. & O. 1939, No. 1118. Throughout this book the Ministry, for brevity, is called the Ministry of Labour.

² The Ministry of Supply Act, 2-3 Geo. 6 c 38, 13th July 1939.

parties. If for the planning of production it was an advantage for each Service to have its own separate organisation, the division of responsibility certainly made the task of the Ministry of Labour in allocating the limited supply of manpower more difficult and onerous.

In its final report the Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower had, it will be remembered, made certain proposals for the handling of civilian labour in time of war, and had recommended that before the Bill to give them effect was drafted the two sides of industry should be brought into consultation. During the winter the Ministry of Labour, to whom fell the responsibility for advising on the content of projected legislation dealing with manpower and for negotiations with industry, gave what must apparently have been prolonged thought to what should be included in a Control of Employment Bill and the matters on which the views of industry should first be ascertained. It was not at any rate until the end of March 1939 that meetings with representatives of the Employers' Confederation and the Trades Union Congress took place, at which the Minister, after emphasising the importance the Government attached to co-operative action, put forward for their consideration a number of proposals designed to form a scheme of war-time labour control. Employers should notify vacancies and engage their workers only through employment exchanges or possibly—where this was traditional practice—certain approved craft unions. As this measure would not by itself provide a remedy for shortages of labour, some means short of compulsion, which the Government was most anxious to avoid, must be found for facilitating the movement of workers from less to more important employment. Might this be done by an approach to employers and workers in less essential undertakings and by providing tribunals to which appeal could be made if the employer was unwilling to release a worker or a worker unwilling to transfer to other employment? If this were thought practicable, it would seem to be necessary to set up local committees consisting of representatives of employers and workers to supervise the operation of the scheme and a national committee or committees for consultation on the many problems that would arise, including the payment of allowances to workers to compensate them for loss incurred by extra travelling or separation from their dependants. Turning to wages the Minister affirmed the Government's intention to maintain the existing voluntary or statutory negotiating machinery. In the case of industries which had no joint machinery of their own it might, however, be desirable to take powers by which, after reference to a tribunal, recognised rates of wages and conditions of employment would be compulsorily extended to establishments where they were not in operation. Similarly the existing machinery should continue to be used to avoid stoppages of work, but it was for consideration whether there should not be a compulsory reference of a dispute to

arbitration when all other methods of reaching a settlement had been exhausted.

Representatives of the Trades Union Congress had a further meeting with the Minister in April at which—subject to an assurance that there would be an effective control of foodstuffs, prices and profits—they expressed willingness to work in co-operation with the Government. They further accepted the necessity of mobilising labour in war-time but showed little disposition to agree to the specific proposals that had been made. In June the T.U.C. submitted what was in effect an alternative scheme of their own. In it they proposed that national committees, one for each main industry, should be set up and armed with executive powers. To each of these committees the Government should be obliged to notify their potential requirements from the industry concerned together with a list of priority orders for production. The committees would then evolve the best system for mobilising labour and effecting transfers of workers. They should also be given the function of considering any changes required in the existing machinery for determining wages, and the terms of any agreement arrived at by collective bargaining should, it was contended, be made statutorily binding on the whole of the industry concerned. These proposals, which amounted to the transfer of executive authority from the Government to industry, were of course unacceptable, but efforts by the Ministry to obtain some modification of them were abortive.

It was now July and the Ministry of Labour was being pressed by the Committee of Imperial Defence to submit its definitive plans so that a Bill for the control of labour should be ready for introduction immediately on the outbreak of war which was daily becoming more probable. The Committee sharply criticised the Ministry's reluctance to promote legislation without the prior consent of the T.U.C. Similar criticism came from some other sources. A body of economists set up by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Stamp to investigate the preparations for war-time control of civilian labour invited the Ministry to give an account of its positive plans—the implication being, as was subsequently concluded, that they were almost entirely negative. Whatever may be thought of the equity of this judgement or whatever criticisms may be made of an apparent lack of direction and urgency in the Ministry's handling of its negotiations with the T.U.C. the salient factor which may explain, if not condone, the Ministry's attitude was the deep mistrust which the T.U.C. openly showed of the Government's policy and intentions. To have attempted to introduce over their heads a statutory control over the employment and movement of workers might well have produced disunity on the home front at the very moment when unity in the face of the enemy was a vital necessity.

Confronted with the demand from the Committee of Imperial

Defence for immediate action the Ministry dropped its more contentious proposals and instructed Parliamentary Counsel to draft a Bill for the compulsory engagement of workers through the employment exchanges, to which it thought the T.U.C. would not take exception. In this hope however it was disappointed. In further discussions the T.U.C. representatives reiterated, despite the recently announced Armaments Profits Duty, their scepticism of the Government's plans to control prices and profits, and declined their support in advance of any measure of war-time labour control. The Bill was thus introduced in Parliament on September 5th without the agreement of the T.U.C. to its specific proposals, and it was soon apparent that in its present form it would be opposed by the Labour Party. In these circumstances it was decided to delay its passage so as to enable the Government to accept amendments which would satisfy the Opposition and the T.U.C.

The amended Control of Employment Act received the Royal Assent on 21st September¹ and its main provisions can be briefly set out. The Minister was empowered to make Orders by which employers in specified industries would be prohibited from advertising for workers without the Minister's consent or from engaging or re-engaging specified workers otherwise than through an employment exchange or approved trade union. Consent, however, was not to be refused to the engagement or re-engagement of a worker unless the Minister was satisfied that suitable alternative employment was available and had been brought to the man's notice. The worker might then appeal to a Court of Referees, and if they were of the opinion that no such opportunity was available to him, his previously disallowed engagement was to be automatically approved and compensation for any loss incurred by him was to be paid. Lastly, before making an Order the Minister was to refer a draft of what was proposed to a committee appointed by himself consisting of a chairman and an equal number of representatives of the association of employers and workers mainly concerned, and a copy of its report was to be laid in the House of Commons side by side with the Order to be made.

This mutilated Act, hedged about with imported restrictions, belied its title. It provided no effective means of controlling the employment of manpower. Perhaps, however, in the circumstances it may be deemed a prudent compromise. To have introduced no legislation would have been interpreted as a Government surrender to the trade unions: for a more drastic statute the omens were not propitious. The Government must first win the confidence of the workers and that, as we shall see, was not fully achieved until the country's plight was desperate and the Minister of Labour was one of themselves.

¹ 2 & 3 Geo. 6 c. 104.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF WAR

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR falsified the predictions that had been confidently made about Hitler's strategy. It had been anticipated that a full scale air attack would be immediately launched on the country to disrupt its economy, weaken civilian morale, and by dislocating transport prevent the despatch of troops to assist the French to hold the Maginot line upon which it was expected that the might of the German army would be concentrated. Sirens sounded, but no bombs fell. An expeditionary force was despatched to France, but it was not till the spring of the next year that it was engaged with the enemy. This anti-climax had psychological effects which were not an unmixed blessing. If the immediate reaction was relief that impending and unknown horrors had not materialised, as months went past and nothing happened to disturb normal activities, the keyed up excitement which had been the response to the Munich crisis was now replaced almost unconsciously by a kind of frustrated apathy. Perhaps after all Hitler had no imperialist designs on the West, or, if he had, they must have been postponed. Time was on our side, and our resources in men and materials could be gradually built up without premature interference with the economic life of the country and the personal liberties of the civilian population. By contrast with the waves of patriotic enthusiasm that swept across the country in August 1914, a puzzled mood of quiet expectation pervaded the weeks that followed the outbreak of the Second World War.

In the early days of September this atmosphere of complacency pervaded the Government's approach to manpower problems. Although the projected size of the Services taken together was large, few doubted that enough men of military age would be forthcoming. As for the timely supply of arms and equipment, while the Air Ministry and the Admiralty might encounter some difficulties in matching men with machines, it was generally assumed that the less highly mechanized equipment required by the Army could be provided as rapidly as men were called up and posted to their units. The Ministry of Supply believed that it could keep pace with the current programme of a field force of thirty-two divisions, provided that only twenty of them had to be equipped by the end of the first year of war. The Ministry of Labour was of the opinion that skilled labour would go where it was

wanted under the normal influence of supply and demand, while the untapped pool of over a million unemployed would for some time ahead provide the semi-skilled and unskilled workers that were likely to be required. In any case these were matters for industry to settle. The Ministry had no call to interfere, nor indeed under the weakened Control of Employment Act which it had been forced to accept had it any effective powers for the control of manpower.¹ The employers on the whole shared the views of the Ministry and as yet saw no reason to resort to special measures to supplement the available supplies of skilled labour. On their side the trade unions were not disposed to surrender their traditional practices or to agree to the introduction of dilution so long as there were thousands of unemployed men standing idle. In short, in the early days of the war the prevailing doctrine was *laissez-faire*.

It was not, however, long before the voice of criticism was heard. The slow tempo of the build up of the Army was challenged, and the Land Forces Committee of the War Cabinet recommended that the scale and speed of intake should be raised. Equipment should be provided in two years for fifty-five divisions, including the requirements of five divisions from the Colonies and Dominions, and for twenty of these by the end of the first twelve months. But, until it had considered the needs of the Air Force and the Navy, the War Cabinet was not satisfied that this was a sound recommendation. The Ministry of Supply was towards the end of September beginning to doubt the feasibility of even the first year's programme, and in other quarters a growing anxiety was apparent about the speed at which the armament industries could be expanded and the sources from which the requisite labour would be forthcoming. There were too many unknown factors. Accordingly it was decided to set up an inter-departmental committee under the chairmanship of Humbert Wolfe, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, to make a statistical investigation of the proposed munitions programme 'with a view to determining more exactly the labour demands on various categories that will arise and to defining the resultant problems that will have to be surmounted'. The Committee was instructed to work to the following production programme: For the Army equipment by September 1940 for twenty and by September 1941 for fifty-five effective divisions; for the Air Force an output of machines rising by the end of the third year of war to 2,300 a month; and for the Navy and Merchant Service a turn-out of ships of the order of two million gross tons a year.

The Committee sent its report to the War Cabinet in January 1940. It had limited its investigations to general, electrical and marine engineering together with aircraft, motor vehicle manufacture and

¹ See above p. 60.

shipbuilding; the manpower involved in the production of iron, steel and other raw materials used by industry was excluded. Moreover, even in this circumscribed field the method of equating demand and supply was necessarily tentative. With the help of departmental statisticians an attempt was made to express on an agreed basis production requirements in terms of the labour that would be needed, and to these the Committee added estimates in respect of export and home civilian consumption in the selected industries. These demand figures were then compared with the supply of workers which the exchange of insurance books in July 1939 showed to be available in the particular industries; allowances were made for the number that had joined the Forces since July, but there were no corresponding adjustments for recent inflow into the industries or for the effect of present and prospective call-up under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act. On this basis the Committee reached the conclusion that to carry out the production programme, the labour force of the industries concerned would have to be increased by over 1,300,000 or 70 per cent. by July–September 1940, and by nearly 2,200,000 or 117 per cent. by July 1941, in addition to the replacement of men called up for military service. This, of course, was not the whole picture of war requirements. More building labour for factory construction and more workers for the production of chemicals and explosives would be wanted, but it was not anticipated in 1939 that these requirements would be difficult to meet. The main problem seemed to centre round the needs of the metal-using industries.

Of more immediate value was the emphasis which the Committee placed upon the necessity of increasing the supply of skilled workers in the engineering industry. In the next eighteen months it estimated that an additional 130,000 would be required. For the most part industry would have to make good this deficiency by a more effective use of its existing personnel. This would entail deskilling of jobs and the training and upgrading of semi-skilled workers to carry out processes that were normally regarded as the province of the fully skilled craftsman. Even if the standards of military equipment were to be modified, this would not remove the anticipated 'bottleneck'.

The Committee made it clear that, even if the necessary materials and machine tools were to become available, it could not, as far as manpower was concerned, give a guarantee that the proposed production programme could be accomplished on the scale envisaged for either the first or second year. Nevertheless with more faith than logic (or because perhaps it thought it not its business to question the War Cabinet decisions about the size of the Forces) it recommended that 'despite the difficulties the proposed programme should remain as an objective'.

When the Report on its way to the War Cabinet came to the

Economic Policy Committee doubts were expressed whether the programme should be accepted even as an objective, but these misgivings were not shared by the Cabinet. It gave full consideration to the recommendations and implications of the Report. It noted that the manpower estimates must be treated as an understatement, since an additional 50,000 would be needed to carry out the revised scale of merchant shipping building and repairing that had since been approved, and it reached the following main decisions. To make the fullest use of existing manpower in the engineering industry, sub-contracting should be used to the widest possible extent and steps should be taken to ensure that, subject to export requirements, engineering labour should only be employed on work directly connected with the war effort. To meet the shortage of skilled workers dilution, including the introduction of women, should be put into operation, and a long-range policy of training semi-skilled and unskilled workers whether by employers or in Government Training Centres should be adopted. The Minister of Labour was asked to explain the Government's proposals about manpower to both sides of industry, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to arrange for periodical reports to be submitted to the War Cabinet on the progress made in finding the labour necessary for the production programme.

As a first attempt at a manpower budget the Wolfe Report was inevitably a rough and ready document. No sound technique had as yet been evolved for relating output to man-hours, and knowledge about the processes for which skill was a genuine necessity was still rudimentary. Moreover, the scope of the enquiry was on a limited front. No attempt was nor could have been made to survey the whole field of manpower. The machinery had not yet been devised for collecting the necessary data which, when placed at their disposal later in the war, enabled statisticians to forecast with increasing precision the manpower requirements of successive production programmes.

Within a fortnight the War Cabinet received a further appreciation of the position. At the request of the Economic Policy Committee Lord Stamp, the chairman of the Survey of Economic and Financial Plans, had prepared a report on national resources with an appended study on manpower by one of the Government economists. In it attention was directed to a number of disquieting factors which militated against the successful achievement of the proposed war programme. Current plans required the labour force in the munitions industries to be more than doubled in the first twelve months, whereas in the First World War it had only increased by just over fifty per cent. in two years. Acute shortages of manpower might be expected to occur at some vital points of production and there was a danger that some sections of industry might get a disproportionate amount of labour, with the

consequent slowing down of other vital elements in the programme. Dilution too was not proceeding quickly enough. Further, a large number of workers would—contrary to recent trends in population movements—have to be diverted back to the Midlands and the North. There was little evidence that this was happening or, if it did, that it would be easy to find the necessary accommodation. It was not the policy of the Government to encourage rising wage rates and such success as it might have in curbing claims for increases would add to the difficulties of the war industries in attracting more workers. For these reasons Lord Stamp emphatically concluded that the production programme could not be completed within the specified time.

If this judgement was deemed right, Ministers were left with the choice of scaling down the two-year plan or extending its operation over a longer period. After prolonged discussion they decided to work to the existing programme and contented themselves with saying that it should be completed by the earliest possible date. This temporising conclusion was no doubt in part due to the recognised inadequacies of the data upon which manpower statistics were compiled. So long as there was no more accurate means of assessing the build-up of war industries than by deducting the number of registered unemployed from the total of insured persons derived from the mid-summer exchange of insurance books, forecasting could be little more than guesswork. It was, accordingly, decided that in future information should be obtained quarterly, together with sample monthly returns, from firms in the engineering group of industries of the persons employed by them. In this way the periodical reports which the War Cabinet had asked to receive would, it was hoped, become instructive and reliable appraisements of the progress being made in implementing the production programme. These returns, which came to be known as L. Returns, were subsequently extended to other industries and became the foundation on which the manpower budgets were constructed.

(i)

Labour Supply

Against this background of tentative planning it is now time to fill in the foreground of the picture by describing the attempts which were made both before and after the presentation of the Wolfe and Stamp reports to facilitate the movement of workers into the munitions industries. There were three main problems to be solved: the shortage of skilled workers; the transfer of labour from less essential industries to war employment, together with the absorption of the large number of unemployed men and women; and the need for a rational check upon

demands for higher wages. These three questions are largely inter-dependent; for the rate at which semi-skilled and unskilled workers can be taken in and usefully employed by an industry depends to a considerable extent on its success in obtaining the skilled workers it requires, while the readiness of workers in each class to go where they are wanted is at least influenced by the wages which they may expect to receive. Nevertheless, for our purposes the three problems are best considered separately and in turn. This will make for a clearer understanding of the reasons for growing discontent with what appeared to be the deliberately passive attitude of the Ministry of Labour and National Service in the face of persistent and unsatisfied demands for labour for the production programme. This dissatisfaction came to a head in April/May 1940 and issued in a call for a more dynamic policy.¹

THE SHORTAGE OF SKILLED WORKERS

A shortage of skilled workers in the engineering industries was not a discovery of September 1939. It had been foreseen in 1936 when the National Defence Programme had been drawn up,² but in the intervening years the methods which had been discussed for making good the deficiency were as yet more at the stage of accepted principles than of operating practices. Now that the war had come and a vast increase in production would be necessary, the need for quicker and more positive action was imperative. The broad lines on which this should develop were in theory clear enough. The best and fullest use must be made of the existing number of skilled men; and workers with adaptable skill in less essential industries should, wherever possible, be transferred to engineering firms.

A policy for making 'the best and the fullest use of the existing number of skilled men' must obviously have several constituents. First and foremost came dilution—jobs hitherto regarded as the skilled man's preserve must be broken down so that some parts of them could be done by semi-skilled workers already in the factory and other parts by men and women introduced and trained from outside the industry. Secondly, as long as skilled workers remained scarce they would have to be distributed where they were most needed. This principle was easier to enunciate than to put into practice. For just as there was no homogeneous engineering skill but the skills of the borer, turner, tool-maker and so forth, so there was no single engineering industry but a series of engineering specialisations. One of these specialisations was machine tool production and, without increased supplies of machine tools, the engineering industry as a whole could not greatly increase its output.

¹ See below p. 85.

² See above pp. 39-40.

Means would have, therefore, to be found by which the machine tool firms would be given the first pick of the available skilled workers. Moreover, wherever the demand for groups of skilled workers exceeded the supply, there would be poaching through the bait of higher wages unless the movement of labour was controlled. Without such a control the whole production programme would quickly get out of line.

But the powers of the Ministry of Labour for controlling the movement of labour were quite inadequate; for the Control of Employment Act, never in its original form a very powerful instrument, had been emasculated during its passage through the House of Commons. Moreover, such powers as remained could not be used without the consent of organised labour and this consent was most uncertain. The outbreak of war had not removed the legacy of deep mistrust in the minds of trade union leaders of the Government's attitude to Labour. Indeed, if anything the mistrust deepened. For example, it appeared from a statement made by the Minister of Supply in the House of Commons later in September that no place had been assigned to the unions in the regional organisation which he was proposing to set up—a statement that drew from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition a grave warning that, unless this omission was put right, the whole supply machinery would break down. Labour was indeed no longer prepared to be treated as a poor relation; it demanded an honourable recognition of its willingness and suitability for participation in the planning and execution of the production programme.¹ In this atmosphere of distrust the Ministry of Labour chose the path of caution which it continued to tread until forced by growing criticism of the negative results to a more direct and positive approach to the problem of labour supply. Its policy was based on its reiterated belief that industry by itself could solve its own manpower difficulties by voluntary co-operation and that no intervention from outside could avail as a substitute. It should be left to the employers and workers in the engineering industry in consultation with each other to find an effective means of regulating the flow of workers; the Ministry would hold a watching brief and be ready to give advice on any labour questions referred to it. Meanwhile, to avoid occasions for industrial unrest, the Ministry took the wise step of reaching an agreement with the supply departments that on all questions affecting labour relations, such as hours of work, wages and the employment of women, no action should be taken without prior consultation with the Ministry of Labour whether at national or local level.

But, important as it was that the Ministry should play its traditional

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 351, Col. 1095 and 1106, 21st September 1939. (Later in the day the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply announced that area advisory committees were to be set up on which the trade unions and the employers' organisations in each region would be represented: *ibid.*, Col. 1169).

rôle of peacemaker in industry, it was not long before its reluctance to take any direct action for the control of labour was challenged. There was little evidence that the supply of skilled workers was increasing or that its flow was being satisfactorily regulated; on the contrary there were numerous complaints of poaching. The machine tool firms in particular were losing workers they could ill afford to aircraft 'shadow' factories which made more attractive offers. In the hope of checking this scrambling competition, the Engineering Employers' Federation pressed the Ministry of Labour to put the Control of Employment Act into operation if only to the extent of making an Order to control advertisements for labour. The position was serious and the Government, they argued, could not continue merely to stand at the ringside as an interested spectator. The Ministry was not, however, prepared to take the advice for two main reasons. First, it anticipated strong opposition from the A.E.U. towards any implementation of the Act and, secondly, such restraint as it might impose on advertising would do something no doubt to prevent labour moving unnecessarily, but would not help to provide more skilled workers or to make the existing supply go further. A more promising line of development, it felt, was the encouragement of dilution. This the A.E.U. had already accepted in principle and a further agreement recently made had provided for a quicker machinery for its local application. It would, therefore, be the policy of the Ministry to press upon firms the help which the speedy introduction of 'dilutees' would give them in solving their labour difficulties.

The obstacles in the way of operating the policy of dilution were, however, greater than the Ministry of Labour had anticipated. The Relaxation of Customs Agreement was from the point of view of the A.E.U. a satisfactory bargain in that it safeguarded craft standards; but employers especially in the Midlands were less happy about its implications. A fundamental issue arose on a question of definition. Before the war a considerable measure of job breakdown and upgrading of workers had already taken place in the course of normal industrial development. The difficulty was how to find an acceptable formula that would differentiate those sub-divisions which were the fruit of customary practice from those which should be regarded as expedients dictated by the war emergency. Failure to resolve this controversy brought registered dilution to a full stop at Coventry in February 1940, and was the cause of passive resistance to its introduction by the unions on the Clyde. There were also other unfavourable reactions. On the workers' side these came not so much, as might have been expected, from the skilled craftsmen—who were perhaps satisfied that their status would not be debased—as from the semi-skilled artisans. The high wages they could make on piece-work on repetition machines was narrowing the margin between their earnings and those

of the skilled men paid on time rates, and in consequence they were the less attracted by the prospects offered by upgrading. Among them, too, some of the older men were said to be sensitive to the stigma attaching to the unpleasant sounding word 'dilutee'. For their part, the employers were not anxious to introduce dilution if this would cause friction among their staff. More serious and more reprehensible was their unwillingness to take on skilled workers from other industries because of the expense and time that would be involved in acclimatising them to their new work. There was, for example, in the winter of 1939 a considerable reserve of unemployed electricians in consequence of the decline in domestic building, but despite pressure from the Ministry of Labour engineering employers were unwilling to facilitate their transfer. By contrast they were only too ready to hang on to such skilled workers as they had on the grounds that, if not for the moment fully employed, they would soon be all required for the additional work that could be confidently anticipated. For all these reasons and because of the time involved in acquiring and setting up the requisite automatic machines, dilution proceeded at a leisurely pace. In January 1940 the Engineering Employers' Federation reported that only 410 agreements had been registered affecting some 1,600 workers.

The position in the machine tool industry was particularly disturbing. At a meeting in January 1940 with leading representatives of the industry the Minister of Supply stated plainly that the whole British war effort depended upon the speed at which the industry could expand. Out of thirty-four firms, however, only fifteen were working double shifts, and in very few cases had a night shift been introduced. Nowhere was production even approaching maximum output. In self defence the employers emphasised their particular problems. An increase in the number of skilled men was a necessary condition of a more quickly expanding production and, without that, the upgrading of their own semi-skilled workers or the intake of unskilled men from outside was not a practical proposition because of the intricate nature of the work. Although no doubt the employers exaggerated the difficulties of adjusting their methods of production so as to economise in the use of fully skilled workers, dilution alone at this stage was certainly not the remedy. What other steps could be taken? The age of reservation in the Schedule of Reserved Occupations for the type of skilled workers required was already low, and if it were to be brought still lower this could hardly be made to apply to the machine tool industry alone and not to the other branches of the engineering industry in which these workers were also in demand. To order the release from the Army of the skilled men called up under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act could not be done without, it was felt, endangering the efficiency of its armoured units. Skilled men in the

Territorial Army had been combed out at the outbreak of the war and in addition to those already released it was later decided to require the return to civilian life of a further 1,200. Of these it was now agreed that the machine tool industry should have first pick, and the Ministry of Labour issued instructions to its local offices that, in filling vacancies notified to them for skilled labour, they should give first preference to machine tool firms—a procedure which as the war went on was widely used and developed. By March 1940 the exchanges had placed 130 men and, if employers had been less selective, the numbers might have been half as many again. As it was, over 650 vacancies still remained unfilled. The shortage had been reduced but was still of a size to be a deterrent to full production.

When the Wolfe Report was received in January 1940 the Ministry of Labour hoped that its estimate of the large increase in the number of skilled workers that would be required in the next eighteen months would give a stimulus to a wider and more ready adoption of dilution. During February and March 1940 the Minister held conferences with both sides of the engineering industry, at which in accordance with the War Cabinet's decision he put them in possession of the details of the manpower requirements and drew from those figures some outspoken conclusions. There was little prospect of augmenting substantially from outside sources the supply of skilled men in engineering. A solution could only come from a more economical use of those already in the industry and from supplementing this total by a deliberate policy of upgrading semi-skilled workers whose place would in turn have to be filled by unskilled men and women from the labour market. The Minister's hopes that the presentation of these statistics would shake industry into action were rudely shattered. The A.E.U. produced evidence to show that the existing capacity of the industry was being seriously under-utilised. Seven aircraft firms, four other engineering firms and the R.O.F. at Nottingham—all of which were engaged on essential war production—were either working short time or were unable, because of a shortage of raw materials, to make full use of their tools and equipment. Further, at least ten railway workshops were capable of taking larger Government orders but were working at less pressure than before the war. Finally, the union wanted to know why such disappointingly slow progress had been made in setting up the Ministry of Supply's Area Organisation which they believed might have been able to put right at least some of the unsatisfactory cases to which they had referred.

In the light of these charges, which were not seriously disputed, it was no longer possible for the Ministry of Labour to confine itself to a policy of simple exhortation to both sides of industry. It was not merely a shortage of skilled labour that was impeding the munitions programme; no less disquieting was the apparent failure in a number of

cases to make full use of the existing labour forces. Unless the latter complaint could be removed it was clearly useless to press for a rapid extension of dilution. In these circumstances the Minister of Labour changed the direction of his attack on the problems. He tried to persuade both the War Cabinet and the supply departments to turn their attention to other factors which were holding up the production programme, in particular the shortage of raw materials. The response was hardly encouraging. The Prime Minister suggested that the problem should first be discussed by the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Supply; it was hardly of sufficient urgency to warrant immediate consideration by the War Cabinet. The Secretary of State for Air, while not dissenting from the Minister of Labour's analysis as far as it affected aircraft industries, did not think that anything beyond what was already being done was necessary to increase the supply of raw materials. On a long view labour was likely to be the limiting factor to full production. The Minister of Supply was even less sympathetic. He argued truly enough that some interruption of production from shortages of materials was unavoidable in times of pressure for increased output. In some places however, such as Woolwich, it was not lack of supplies but insufficiency of workers to use what was there that was the trouble. There was no case, he concluded, for easing up methods to increase the number of skilled men on account of difficulties in obtaining materials.

Although he failed to convince his colleagues that the primary cause of the hold-up of production was to be found in a shortage of materials rather than in a scarcity of skilled labour, the Minister of Labour made another attempt to arouse the supply departments to a recognition of what he believed were their rightful responsibilities. Problems of production and manpower, he argued, were closely inter-dependent and could not be properly considered, far less solved, in isolation one from the other. There should be one forum in which the two main issues, the co-ordination of contracts and the supply of skilled workers, could be discussed and, it might be hoped, determined. For this purpose the Area Organisation of the Ministry of Supply, which had been slow in developing, was the obvious choice.¹ Its advisory committees provided means of bringing both sides of the industry into effective consultation and, as the Minister never tired of enunciating, this voluntary co-operation was an essential condition of success. In the process of helping to improve the flow of production, the trade unionists on the committees would come to recognise the logical connection between the slow and irregular expansion of output and the shortage of skilled labour. The advisory committees, which might be given executive functions, could then not only tackle the problem of the economical

¹ See above p. 67.

distribution of skilled labour, but could also draw attention to cases where dilution seemed to be essential.

These proposals were forwarded to the Minister of Supply on 26th April with copies to the Admiralty, Air Ministry and Board of Trade. The Minister's letter was considered by the Supply Council on 2nd May and remitted by it to an inter-departmental committee which met under the chairmanship of the Minister of Supply six days later. In the intervening week the First Lord of the Admiralty submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet in which he produced some evidence to support his belief that the organisation of the manpower of the country for the production of munitions had hardly begun. This coincided with a strong-worded attack by Lord Stamp on the whole policy of the Ministry of Labour with special reference to failure to stem the persistent demands of workers for increases in wages.

The general attack on the Ministry of Labour thus covered a much wider front than the supply of skilled labour. Before discussing its merits and outcome it is therefore necessary to turn back and watch the developments in the other branches of the Ministry's responsibility.

THE MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

At the outset of the war it was hoped by the Ministry of Labour that labour would move of its own accord, in accordance with the normal rules of supply and demand, in sufficient volume to avoid compulsory measures to regulate its flow into employment of importance to the war effort. It would no doubt be a problem to find all the skilled workers that would be required; but, as we have seen, the Ministry believed that this difficulty could be largely overcome through effective co-operation between employers, workers and the supply departments. As for semi-skilled and unskilled workers, there would be for many months ahead an abundant supply, and men and women who had presumably no wish to remain idle would be quick to offer their services as soon as more suitable openings occurred. The employment exchanges were the best means of bringing employers and workers into touch with each other and, if vacancies were notified to them, they would be able to encourage the most suitable workers to apply for them. There should be no need to insist on all engagements being made through the exchanges—a course to which, in any case, the trade unions would take grave exception. So long as supply exceeded demand, persuasion could be relied upon to guide workers where they were most required.

The most obvious source of manpower for war employment was the unemployed. Although the total number had as a result of rearmament dropped by half a million since the early spring of the year, in September 1939 there was still some 1,230,000 on the unemployed registers.

One of the immediate consequences of the war was a decline in employment in industries which can only flourish under conditions of peace. Summer holidays came to a premature end, and substantial numbers of workers in the hotel and catering industries and in the entertainment world, particularly in seaside resorts, became redundant and were given notice. Before long the suspension of much building by private enterprise and by local authorities had thrown appreciable numbers of craftsmen and builders' labourers into enforced idleness. In October the total volume of unemployment had risen by 200,000 and, although by the end of the year some reduction had been made, the long spell of bad weather in January and February pushed the total over one and a half millions. By the middle of March a marked improvement was recorded and a month later the total had fallen below a million.¹

From these figures it might be inferred that till the spring of 1940 little progress had been made in absorbing the unemployed into employment connected with the war effort. Such was certainly the impression left on some sections of the general public. There was a tendency to regard the unemployed registers as a stagnant pool into which more water might seep but from which there were few or no outlets. This was a superficial judgement. An analysis of long-term unemployment made at the beginning of 1940² showed that the number of men who had been out of work for a year or more had fallen by 86,000 and represented 15 per cent. of the total on the registers as compared with 25 per cent. in August 1939. The numerical reductions in this category were also relatively highest in those parts of the country, notably the North West and North East of England and in Scotland, where war production was expanding fastest. Of the numbers remaining on the registers who had had no work for over a year, more than half were classified as general labourers fit for either heavy or light work and, in the early stages of industrial transformation from peace to war-time conditions, there is only a limited demand for this type of labour. From these facts the conclusion may be drawn that, although in the first five months of the war unemployment remained at a disquietingly high level, the situation was not static. Against the inflow of men rendered unemployed by the necessary contraction of peace-time activities there was an outward movement into vacancies which war production was creating. But, although the composition of the registers was thus changing, it was not till March that the total began to decline.

Apart from the unemployed registers, another source of labour supply for war purposes was the less essential industries. It was not

¹ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, April 1940, p. 108 and May 1940, p. 134.

² *Ibid.*, February 1940, pp. 42-44.

unreasonable to expect that workers anticipating an enforced curtailment of output for the home market would, when the opportunity arose, be prepared to transfer voluntarily to employment in which they would be better paid and in which they might expect to be retained as long as the war lasted. Additions to the potential labour supply were also coming from men and especially women who had not previously been in paid employment but who were now anxious to make some contribution towards winning the war, and from boys and girls who had finished their time at school. Quantitatively there was thus for the time being more than a sufficiency of manpower, but the rate at which it could be effectively absorbed into the war effort was another question.

Work would as far as possible have to be brought to areas where there was labour available, and contracts spread so as to avoid overtaxing the local resources of manpower in any one district. This was the policy which the Ministry of Labour persistently advocated; but the supply departments, while accepting the principle, found difficulty in translating it into practice. Although the Ministry of Labour was supposed to be consulted before new contracts were placed or new factories were built, this did not always happen, and in some cases when consultation had taken place the advice of the Ministry was not accepted. The main reason, of course, was that—with the pressing need to increase the volume and expedite the output of munitions—Directors of Production preferred to use firms of whose efficiency they had experience. Moreover, labour was not the only factor they had to take into consideration when deciding on the choice of new or transformed factories. No less important were the transport facilities and the availability of gas, water and electricity. Nevertheless it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, in the early part of the war at any rate, the production programme was planned with too little regard for the possibility of obtaining labour in the areas where the contracts were being placed. It seems to have been assumed that somehow or other the workers would be found, and in that optimistic belief other considerations were allowed to determine the choice and location of firms. However much this principle may on production grounds be condoned—and the difficulties with which Directors of Production were faced must not be minimised—from the manpower point of view it created difficulties which would have been sensibly less if the policy had been framed with rather more concerted thought.¹

Demands for civilian labour were likely to arise from two main sources. First, the munitions industries were bound to expand and to take on more workers than they had previously employed. The speed, however, at which they could engage semi-skilled and unskilled workers would be to a considerable extent determined by their success in

¹ See P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter VII (viii).

overcoming the scarcity of skilled labour. Secondly, both the munitions industries and those industries and services that were essential to the export trade and home requirements would have to make good the loss of employees who were called up. By the middle of January 1940 approximately 225,000 men had been posted to the Forces and three months later this total had nearly doubled. A majority of these young men came, it is true, from occupations which in war were of relatively little importance and replacements would for the most part be unnecessary. But, although the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was an effective instrument for protecting the genuinely skilled worker, industries—including those making munitions—that were regarded as essential had nevertheless to make their contribution to the Forces. These gaps would have to be filled and substitute labour engaged and trained. Moreover, if it was necessary to build and man factories in isolated places, steps would have to be taken to overcome the natural immobility of workers and make it worth their while to go away from their homes. Many workers, too, would be applying for jobs of which they had no previous experience and would require training before they could become effective units of production. No less important would be the attention that would have to be given to working conditions if men and women were to stay at their new jobs. These were some of the major problems that had to be faced and could clearly only be resolved by patient and imaginative planning.

Did all this point to the need for some control over the movement of labour? It is unfortunately impossible, through the lack of relevant statistics, to trace in any detail the progress which was made during the first six months of the war in the re-deployment of manpower to meet these demands. There is insufficient evidence upon which to estimate the extent to which important vacancies which were actually notified were being promptly and satisfactorily filled. Nor can any trustworthy picture be drawn of the scale of the voluntary movement of workers from one industry to another and of the consequent increases and decreases in the size of the labour forces of these industries.¹ From the narrative reports, however, submitted by the Ministry of Labour to the War Cabinet—at first at fortnightly and later at monthly intervals—some interesting sidelights emerge. The main emphasis in the reports was on the continuing shortage of skilled workers in the engineering and shipbuilding industries, and it was not until March that any significant change was indicated. Employers in the engineering industry were then beginning to make more determined efforts to solve

¹ In Table 16 at the end of Chapter VI figures are given which show the distribution of manpower between the Armed Forces and the three war-time groups of industries at mid-1940 as compared with mid-1939. Although there is no statistical evidence upon which to apportion the changes that occurred in industry to any particular period of the twelve months, it may, however, be assumed that much of the regrouping and the increase in the numbers employed shown in the table took place during the period April/June 1940. See also Statistical Appendix, Table I.

their own difficulties by demanding a less high degree of skill in applicants for some of their vacancies, and dilution was becoming a little more extensive. By April some further progress had been made and a marked increase in overtime and extra night shifts was reported. With regard to vacancies for less skilled workers, there are few indications in the reports of any special difficulty in filling those in relatively populous areas. Attention was, however, drawn to a serious labour shortage in Coventry, where three new 'shadow' aircraft factories were being built, and to the large demands for labour that might be anticipated from Royal Ordnance Factories in remoter areas when they came into full production. To meet these requirements workers would have to be imported from other districts. No scheme, however, was being drawn up by the Ministry for paying travelling fares or lodging allowances; if these were required it was for the employers, it was felt, to find the money.

The Ministry of Labour's reports also mentioned measures that were being taken to increase the supply of munitions workers. To alleviate unemployment and to fit men to take jobs for which some measure of skill was required, classes were being provided and extended in certain engineering, building and other skilled occupations at Government Training Centres. At the beginning of 1940 an intensive recruiting campaign was launched which met with a good response. On March 28th it was reported that over 7,000 civilians were in training and a further 3,000 were awaiting allocation to Centres. In addition, over 2,000 serving soldiers were undergoing courses of training to fit them for employment in their units as 'tradesmen'. Difficulty was, however, being experienced in obtaining instructors, who could only be found from among the already insufficient numbers of skilled workers, and several hundred equipped places remained unfilled. This was in part the reason why opportunities for training at Government Training Centres were not being extended beyond the unemployed to workers in less essential industries. Among the industries most affected by unemployment the plight of the building industry during the winter months was singled out. By April, however, the picture had changed. The Government Emergency Building Programme of factories and hutted camps, together with the A.R.P. requirements of local authorities, was now placing a considerable strain on reserves of labour, and alternative building methods designed to save steel and timber had resulted in a shortage of bricklayers. As many of the new buildings were in isolated areas the further difficulty arose of getting labour to go to the sites. As a partial remedy the Minister of Labour accordingly decided to make an Order,¹ the only one to which he would agree, under the Control of Employment Act prohibiting employers from advertising for building labour.

¹ Control of Employment (Advertisements) Order, 1940. S.R. & O. 1940, No. 522.

Thus some progress could be recorded in labour supply, but in general the measures taken to overcome the present and foreseeable difficulties were sporadic, indecisive and insufficient. The situation was in many respects similar to that in the spring of 1938. Not enough was being done, and it was not being done quickly enough.¹

These general impressions would seem to be confirmed by the results of an enquiry made in a small but very important section of industry in the spring of 1940. It will be remembered that, when studying the Wolfe Report, the War Cabinet had been impressed by the unreliable nature of the information upon which some of its findings were based and had called for quarterly returns from those sections of industry most directly concerned with the production of armaments. A questionnaire was accordingly sent to employers in engineering, boilermaking, motor vehicle and aircraft manufacture asking them to give figures of the number and types of worker they were employing. The returns were received in April. Unfortunately not all the employers to whom the enquiry had been sent replied and, while those that did provided an occupational analysis of their male workers over twenty-one years of age and gave the number of apprentices, women and girls subdivided into skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers for 1940, most were only able to supply total figures under these headings for 1939. Only a general comparison could accordingly be made. The figures were as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Numbers employed in the Engineering, Motor and Aircraft Group—Great Britain

Sex and age group	Number of workpeople employed by firms who rendered returns		Increase	
	Week ended 17th June 1939	Week ended 6th April 1940	Number	Percentage of number employed in June 1939
Men 21 and over .	803,241	880,045	76,804	9·6
Youths and boys under 21 . . .	219,822	244,449	24,627	11·2
Women 18 and over	54,612	72,311	17,699	32·4
Girls under 18 .	16,282	19,022	2,740	16·8
Total .	1,093,957	1,215,827	121,870	11·1

¹ In the course of a debate on the Ministry of Labour and National Service Vote in the House of Commons on 16th April 1940 there was substantial criticism, especially by Liberal members, of the slow progress made in organising the manpower of the country for war purposes: H. of C. Deb., Vol. 359, Col. 817 ff.

It was this Report that drove the First Lord of the Admiralty on 4th May to send a memorandum to the War Cabinet calling attention to the slow progress that had been made in building up the labour forces required for war production. In the group of industries that had been surveyed manpower had increased by only 11 per cent. in the last ten months. This was less than one-sixth of the expansion stated to be required in the Wolfe Report, and was no more than was achieved in 1936-37 by the mere improvement in trade without any Government interference. Although 350,000 boys left school each year the number entering this group of industries had only risen by 25,000. Moreover, the proportion of women and young persons was only up by 1 per cent. and the ratio of women to men was 1 : 12, whereas during the first world war it had risen from 1 : 10 to 1 : 3. These facts led the First Lord to the conclusion that 'in this fundamental group at any rate we have hardly begun to organise manpower for the production of munitions'.

The First Lord did not attempt to allocate blame for the disappointing results which the report revealed. To the supply departments, however, the indictment strengthened their growing conviction that what was fundamentally wrong was the refusal of the Ministry of Labour to accept responsibility for the control and distribution of manpower. To the Ministry of Labour, on the other hand, the indictment strengthened the conviction it had always had that what was fundamentally wrong was the refusal of the supply departments to accept responsibility for the proper placing of contracts.

(ii)

Wage Controls

A perusal of the articles written and the speeches made by trade union leaders in the autumn and winter of 1939 leaves little doubt that, while prepared to lend the whole weight of their movement to the overthrow of Hitler, they also looked to the war as a means of improving the living standards of the workers and their status in the community. These two aims were not necessarily contradictory; for in a sense the war with Germany could be regarded as a continuation on an international front of trade union struggles at home, and Nazism as the most aggressive obstacle to the realisation of trade union ideals. It was for the Trade Union Movement, said Sir Walter (later Lord) Citrine at the 1939 Trades Union Congress, to ensure that when finally Nazism had been defeated they emerged with better prospects and greater powers than they had ever known previously.¹ This same belief that

¹ *Report of the 71st Trades Union Congress, 1939, p. 292.*

labour was entering a war on two fronts was a little later reaffirmed by Ernest Bevin in an article in his union's journal in characteristically blunt language. 'The working classes are faced with two offensives, one by Hitler which we must defeat, and one by the bankers which, if the Government does not stop, will lead to the defeat of our nation'.¹ In pursuit of their aim of raising the living standards of their workers the trade union leaders came down strongly in favour of a high wage policy. It was not sufficient that wages should be merely adjusted to meet the rise in the cost of living; in determining the scale of increases such factors as increased output, improved techniques in production and the greater exertions demanded of the workers should also be taken into account. Moreover, the trade union leaders favoured price controls and rationing. There were, they recognised, obvious inflationary dangers in this combination of high wages and controlled prices, but there were other ways as yet unexplored—a capital levy, for example—by which, some trade unionists suggested, the expenses of war and the cost of stabilising prices could be defrayed. The Government should also give immediate attention to the high profits which militated more than anything else against a united effort on the industrial front.²

In Government circles the policy advocated by the trade unions came in for severe criticism. It was economically impossible for the standard of living of the workers as a whole to rise—indeed it might well fall; any attempt to push up wages would, therefore, only precipitate a vicious spiral of inflation. This attitude was supported by some employers who with half an eye on post-war trade opposed rising wages, which, if they were to become habitual, would prejudice the development of exports both during and after the war. Nor was official criticism confined to economic arguments. The moral implication of the trade union proposals was also assailed. 'Do the workers really claim', asked one of the economic experts, 'that they alone should be war profiteers taking advantage of the war to increase their consumption, and that the whole burden of the war should be borne by others?'³ This castigation was not altogether fair to the trade union leaders in that it failed to recognise the dual rôle they were trying to play. While genuinely anxious to encourage an all-out effort by workers engaged in the output of munitions, they had also constantly to bear in mind their obligations to protect their members' interests and foster their welfare. Were they to lose the confidence of their members, they would be faced with unofficial revolts which would not merely undermine trade union solidarity but, as the history of the First World War had shown, disrupt the whole production programme.

¹ *Transport and General Workers' Record*, February 1940, pp. 242–243.

² Speech by Mr. Bevin at Hanley May Day demonstration in 1940.

³ J. M. Keynes: *How to pay for the War*, 1940, pp. 20–21.

In opposition to the economic advisers to the Government who advocated the imposition upon industry of a system of regulated wage control the Ministry of Labour, which had the advantage of being in closer touch than other departments with the mind of organised labour, favoured a different policy. Consistently with the advice it had given to the Committee of Imperial Defence in pre-war years it urged that, before any decisive action was taken, industry should be brought into consultation. It was only with the voluntary co-operation of industry that a practicable solution to the labour problems that the war was bringing would be found. In furtherance of this principle the Minister of Labour set up a National Joint Advisory Council composed of an equal number of representatives of the British Employers' Confederation and the Trades Union Congress as a forum of discussion on questions of manpower policy. But before the first meeting of the Council on 1st November some significant trends in wages and prices were apparent. With a substantial increase in the cost of imports during the first two months of war, the level of prices was rising fast. By the end of October food items in the cost-of-living index, helped by a tax on sugar, were sixteen points up and the full cost-of-living index had risen by nine per cent.¹ To offset these higher prices advances in wages had been agreed in a number of important industries in addition to those in which wages were governed by a sliding scale. Shipyard employees, miners and certain classes of steel-workers in South Wales had all won increases, and a national minimum wage for transport and railway workers had been conceded.² Soon the dockers were to get a rise of 1s. a day, and workers in the engineering industry were pressing a claim for an increase of 10s. a week. A cycle of wage claims had set in. When, therefore, the Minister met his Council for the first time neither side was in a conciliatory mood. The workers were irritated by the sharp increase in the cost of living; the employers were alarmed at the growing pressure for wage increases, and raised the question of a more rigid control. At their joint request it was agreed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer be invited to meet the Council and discuss the problem of wages as part of general financial policy.

It was not long before a further attack was launched. Encouraged no doubt by the reported attitude of the employers, Lord Stamp sharply criticised the Ministry of Labour's policy on the ground that it failed to take account of the economic realities of war. Demands of production for war purposes meant that the quantity of goods for civilian consumption would steadily diminish; an increase in spending capacity, although it could be reduced by taxation and savings, would inevitably lead to a rise in prices followed by a demand for higher wages. One

¹ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, January 1940, p. 5.

² See *ibid.*, p. 4 where further details are given.

way of stopping this process from becoming cumulative was to prevent wage rates from moving up equivalently with rises in the cost of living. For example, it might be laid down that no claim for wage increases would be allowed until the cost-of-living index, which at September was 155, had reached 175, and then any increase awarded should be proportional up to the first £2 a week of income, and after that at a lower ratio. To put this plan into operation some machinery for the control or regulation of wages would have to be devised. The second inflationary element was high profits; and a firm hold would have to be kept on contracts by the Ministry of Supply. But profits, Lord Stamp concluded, were a lesser danger than high wages, since there was a longer interval between their reception and their disbursement and they could be more easily checked by taxation.

On the need for holding down the real earnings of workers there was general agreement in Government circles, but the Minister of Labour questioned the assumption that a central wages tribunal could effectively control wage movements. It would have no allies among the trade union leaders and, should its findings be disregarded by organised workers intent on securing improvements in their wage standards, it would quickly lose authority. The result might be what it was most desired to avoid—the regular review of wages on a cost-of-living basis. By these arguments the Minister of Labour persuaded his Ministerial colleagues that it was hopeless to attempt to impose a system of wage control without the goodwill of the trade unions. At the same time he fully accepted the economic analysis upon which the need for wage control was based, and he suggested that, if the National Advisory Council were given information which could be made public about the gravity of the financial position, the readiness of both sides to cooperate in finding an acceptable solution might be confidently anticipated. The more the country was placed in possession of the facts the less was the danger of the situation being exploited by self-appointed spokesmen of the rank and file of the workers. This advice was adopted and the forum of discussion moved to Parliament and the National Advisory Council.

On 29th November the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a speech in the House of Commons drew an impressive picture of the strain which the war was already imposing on the national economy.¹ The main theme of his speech, which was repeated a week later in his address to the National Advisory Council, was the need for sacrifices by all sections of the community. The rich were neither rich enough nor sufficiently numerous to bear the burden alone. Steps had been taken to curb high profits of employers, but prices were still continuing to rise. Rationing, which the trade unions had advocated, would not by

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 355, Col. 160–175, 29th November 1939.

itself check this inflationary tendency. What was necessary was the acceptance of the principle that wage rates should not rise equivalently with increases in the cost of living. The employers supported the Chancellor; but the trade unionists, while agreeing on the need for sacrifices, were not happy that they were being fairly apportioned. A much greater redistribution of income was surely still possible and the limits of taxable capacity had not yet been reached. In the circumstances to ask the trade union leaders to support a policy aimed at lowering the living standard of the workers was tantamount to inviting them to surrender their responsibilities to hot-headed agitators within the movement. Negotiations dragged on for many weeks without any more positive result than an offer by the trade unions to conduct a campaign for voluntary savings, if an assurance were given by the employers that they would not use the fact of the workers' capacity to save as an argument for rejecting a claim for wages increases and by the Government that voluntary savings would be disregarded where a means test was applied.

Shortly after negotiations with the trade unions within the National Advisory Council had begun, the Government was faced with a new dilemma. The Minister of Food warned the War Cabinet that unless his department were to carry heavy losses, food prices would have to be increased by a further eight per cent. which would bring the total increase since 1st September to no less than twenty per cent. above pre-war level. A jump of this magnitude would destroy any hopes of an agreement with the unions, and rather than prejudice the outcome of the negotiations it was agreed that a temporary subsidy for a period of six weeks was worth while; this decision was not to be made public.¹ The consequent steadying of food prices did not, however, lessen the unwillingness of the trade unions to commit themselves to any firm system of wage control. So, before the six weeks trial was over, the Government had to decide whether to continue the subsidies, and in the end it was agreed that they should go on for another six months. This decision without any mention of a time limit was announced by the Chancellor in the House of Commons on 31st January, and despite his first intention he refrained in his speech from insisting on any reciprocal action by the trade unions in the matter of wage control.²

Meanwhile negotiations pursued their barren course until, on the advice of the Ministry of Labour, the Government decided that as long as the trade unions were unwilling to co-operate in any positive scheme of control it would be better to press them no further. With the subsidy on foodstuffs it was to be expected that claims for wage increases would decline in number, and such as were made would be

¹ See R. J. Hammond: *Food* Vol. 1, 1951, p. 100.

² H. of C. Deb., Vol. 356, Col. 1154-6.

pressed with less insistence. Looking further ahead the best chances of keeping prices and wages in reasonable equilibrium seemed to the Government to lie in educating the public about the financial position of the country and in emphasising, as the trade unions had suggested, the advantages of saving. The planning of the campaign, however, presented great difficulties. The public were unlikely to be content with the need for sacrifices while there was little evidence of restrictions on the consumption of the rich, who still seemed able to maintain their standard of living. In such circumstances propaganda that appeared to be weighted in favour of wage restraint might well promote a demand for increases. In the end it was decided to launch a publicity campaign directed to all sections of the community without distinction and to appeal to each to join in a common effort to save. The National Economy Drive, as it was called, was inaugurated in April 1940.

In the early spring of the year signs began to multiply that in certain sections of industry there was a real labour shortage and that the competition for workers was beginning to force up wages. Wages for building workers at R.O.F. sites in Wales and in Scotland were rising sharply. In Coventry, Bristol and the industrial towns in the North West and North East of England there were competitive wage increases to attract the skilled workers. The engineering industry provided the most damaging ammunition for the critics of the existing lack of control of labour, and the Government set up an inter-departmental committee to investigate.¹ The evidence that came to light was disconcerting. In firms in the North West of England it was common to work as much as 64 hours a week. Bonus rates were often 40–50 per cent. above time rates and merit bonuses, which used to be given exceptionally, were sometimes now offered to whole departments. By these means firms out to get labour had pushed up their skilled men's wages to between £7 and £8 a week, and one leading employer admitted spending £1,200 within a few weeks in advertising for tool-room workers. Even though there was not the same scarcity of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, earnings had gone up to between £5 and £6 a week.² In the Midlands the scale of wages was even higher. Some firms which had just taken on large Government contracts gave their piece-workers a 100 per cent. bonus and in practically none was it less than 50 per cent. One firm in Coventry, it was reported, had deliberately fixed its prices to secure a 100 per cent.

¹ Interdepartmental Committee on Wages in the Armament Industry under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Supply.

² In the spring of 1940 the minimum time rates of the skilled fitter and of the labourer in the engineering industry were 73s. and 57s. respectively. Average earnings for men aged 21 and over were in July 1940 as follows: general engineering 97s. 11d.; electrical engineering 107s. 4d.; marine engineering 101s. 4d.; constructional engineering 95s. 8d.; motor vehicle, cycle and aircraft manufacture and repair 114s. 11d.

bonus for its workers, and the average actually received was as high as 118 per cent.

These revelations alarmed the Ministry of Labour no less than its critics in other departments, but in face of mounting opposition it stuck tenaciously to what was now its familiar argument. The high wages being offered in Coventry and elsewhere were not due to the Ministry of Labour's wages policy but to the individualism of supply departments and their unwillingness to consult together about each other's problems. Contracts, too, were given out without regard to other demands upon the limited supply of available local labour, and in these circumstances competitive poaching was not surprising. The Area Organisation of the Ministry of Supply had been set up with the express purpose of regulating the flow of production but it had been almost stillborn. The immediate remedy was to make this organisation work efficiently. This was the way to stop competitive bids for workers and to convince organised labour that the Government wanted to work in co-operation with them.

This proposed line of action made few converts. To its critics the Ministry's proposal seemed dilatory, ineffective and unconstructive. Early in May, as we have already seen, Lord Stamp denounced the whole labour policy. The Government should no longer allow itself to be deterred from positive action by the familiar excuse that the trade unions were not yet ready to accept some form of compulsion. The problem of high wages in the engineering industry could not be solved by administrative expedients; a radical change of policy was essential. In contrast with the regulated allocation of materials, the distribution of manpower had been left to the play of an open market. No attempt had been made to interfere with the employers' freedom to obtain labour by the offer of wage increases or with the freedom of the civilian worker to move from one employment to another in pursuit of higher wages. To make matters worse money was being spent upon food subsidies in the unfulfilled expectation that the trade unions would come to some agreement over wage control. Food subsidies should be reconsidered as part of a balanced wages policy and the trade unions should be brought into line and labour taken under control.

This constructive indictment admitted of little or no compromise. It could be either accepted or rejected. But, if the diagnosis and the proposed remedies were approved, a fundamental change in policy was the logical consequence.

(iii)

Proposed Change of Policy

It will be remembered that in April 1940 the Minister of Labour had made another attempt to place the responsibility for securing sufficient skilled workers firmly upon the supply departments.¹ When the Inter-Departmental Committee, to which the Supply Council had referred the Minister's letter met on 8th May, the supply departments, so far from accepting the responsibility which the Minister had thought to impose upon them, made a united attack upon his policy. In this they were encouraged by the First Lord's memorandum and, although this was not expressly mentioned, by the critical analysis of the labour situation which Lord Stamp a few days previously had submitted to the Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy. The departments were prepared to agree that it was for each supply department to ensure that the labour employed by factories on war contracts was being efficiently used and to accept a greater share in hastening the introduction of dilution. But, they strongly urged, the general supervision of the distribution and movement of manpower, including control of poaching and competitive bidding in the labour market, must be the responsibility of a single department and in their view this department should be the Ministry of Labour.

In their reply the representatives of the Ministry of Labour pointed out that existing machinery would not enable them to carry out the functions which they were now being asked to undertake. They would require a staff of labour inspectors with authority to enter factories and identify skilled workers who could be released without interference with essential production. They would need power to override other departments in the allocation of available skilled workers between firms operating in different industries, and the relative importance to the war effort of particular products would have to be settled. Under the Control of Employment Act they could prohibit advertisements for labour and also oblige employers to make their engagement of workers through the employment exchanges but, if the latter power were to be used without the consent of the unions, some stoppages affecting production were only to be expected.

These arguments, while not weakening the determination of the supply departments to persist in the advocacy of their policy, impressed upon them the need to back the Ministry of Labour in seeking additional powers to carry it into operation. They accordingly put it on record that in their submission full responsibility for the control and recruitment of civilian labour should be vested in the Ministry

¹ See above pp. 71-72.

of Labour with authority to override, where necessary, production departments and the Board of Trade, and that the Ministry of Labour in approaching the War Cabinet for the necessary additional powers could be assured of their full support. Before, however, their proposals reached the War Cabinet the Chamberlain Government had fallen. Under the new Administration the plans for the control of manpower which emerged, while influenced by earlier discussion, transcended in scope and directness of purpose the proposals adumbrated at the conference on 8th May.

In retrospect the history of manpower during what has been called the phoney war is not an inspiring record of experiment and achievement. The call-up under the National Service Act, it is true, went on steadily and some 450,000 men were posted to the Services. But by contrast within the industrial field activities were sporadic and hesitating and there were few indications of a coherent policy. This impression is sharpened by the protracted discussions between the supply departments and the Ministry of Labour about the reasons for the delay in the expansion of war production and by the attempts made to saddle each other with the blame for the slow progress achieved. Neither side was justified in all the allegations it made against the other; neither can be exempted from some measure of blame. If the Ministry of Supply exercised an ineffective control over contracts and was slow in developing its Area Organisation, the Ministry of Labour in its laudable desire to preserve industrial peace may seem to have been unduly reluctant to assume some of the responsibilities that might be thought to fall to it in its capacity as Ministry of National Service.

But the real cause of the frustrations and hesitations that characterised manpower policy in the early months of the war lay deeper. It was political and not administrative. First, there was the lack of a bold and courageous leadership from the Government and, it may be thought, a failure to recognise the magnitude of the task that lay before it and the pressing necessity to take steps, however unpopular, to mobilise the human resources of the nation. Secondly, there was the legacy of Munich. The Government had not recovered the confidence of the people and in the minds of labour leaders there still lingered a deep mistrust of its motives and aims, which showed itself in a persistent refusal to agree to measures which in different circumstances they would have been prepared to accept as practical war-time necessities. In this atmosphere of suspicion, to have attempted to impose labour controls might well, as the Ministry of Labour believed, have precipitated industrial unrest. But without labour controls could the necessary expansion of production be achieved? This was the dilemma out of which a change of Government provided a timely way of escape.

CHAPTER V

MR. BEVIN AT THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR

WHEN MR. CHURCHILL was called upon to form a National Government it was generally expected that for the important post of Minister of Labour he would select his man from among the Labour members who had sat on the front Opposition benches during the Chamberlain Administration. His choice was as unexpected as it was courageous and imaginative. Ernest Bevin, who was close on sixty years of age, had never sat in the House of Commons. His whole life had been devoted to furthering the interests and welfare of workpeople, and particularly those who were not craftsmen—the dockers, the vanmen and the lorry drivers. With a passionate belief in the power of corporate loyalty, he had organised them in a single union and won their confidence by a skilful combination of dictation and subservience to democratic control. He was their trusted leader and, although his opponents might castigate him as boss and tyrant, to his own people he was one of themselves freely chosen for his qualities to champion and defend their rights. This mandate he had carried out with courage, vision and directness of purpose. A skilful and patient negotiator, he was as derisive of cant and hypocrisy from the opposite side of the table as he was intolerant of any signs of wavering loyalty among his own supporters. Profoundly convinced that the salvation of the workers lay in the corporate strength that only trade unionism could provide, he was critical of what seemed to him the indeterminateness of the Parliamentary Labour Party, while his own exceptional intelligence which had ripened without formal education in the hard school of realism made him look askance at the intellectualism of the doctrinaire.

But Bevin was not merely one of the outstanding trade union leaders of his age, he was also a great Englishman and patriot, and between the two rôles the connection was causal rather than accidental. When the war came he saw not only the menacing danger of invasion but also in Hitlerism the most formidable opponent yet encountered to the principles for which trade unionism stood. He was thus prepared to lend the whole weight of his authority in encouraging workers to give readily of their labour and services to the destruction of the enemy, provided that the Government gave unquestionable proof of its determination to unite all classes in the country in the vigorous

prosecution of the war. But in the early months this condition was far from being satisfied. Bevin had a deep mistrust of Chamberlain. He suspected that he was still only half-hearted in his opposition to Hitlerism and had neither the will nor the ability to fight the war to a victorious conclusion. He also believed him to be reactionary in his attitude towards Labour and to be incapable of understanding the spirit in which most workers had gone into the war. In this opinion he was confirmed by a patronising reply which the Prime Minister had given to a delegation from the Trades Union Congress asking for an amendment in the Trades Disputes Act; this was to the effect that the Government's attitude would be determined by how well the trade unions behaved themselves during the war. The only Minister of the Chamberlain Government with whom Bevin found it possible to establish anything like friendly relations was Winston Churchill at the Admiralty. In the past, especially at the time of the General Strike, they had been bitter opponents, but the enmity had died down even before the war through the mutual recognition of each other's efforts within his respective party to secure a defence programme adequate to meet the German danger. A further step towards a better understanding was taken in the autumn of 1939 when the First Lord invited Bevin to help him to work out a plan for requisitioning a large part of the trawler fleet with as little reduction as possible in the supply of fish. Here, Bevin felt, was a Minister who was ready to treat the trade unions as vital partners in a great enterprise. Thus between these two men so different in origin, education, political and social outlook, there grew up a mutual respect forged on their shared hatred of Hitler and their determination to defend liberty with all the resources that the country could command. It was, then, not so surprising that when Mr. Churchill took over the direction of the war it was to Mr. Bevin that he entrusted the responsibility of supplying the men and women that the Forces and industry would require.

Mr. Bevin immediately accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to become Minister of Labour with a characteristic reservation that he must first consult 'his own people' because without their support he would be valueless. He lost no time in applying himself to his new job and later, in one of his speeches, he drew a picture of his first days at the Ministry. 'I came in at 2.30 on the afternoon of Tuesday and on Wednesday at 11 o'clock I produced at least the outline of the basis of my scheme. Then at 3 o'clock the staff gathered round me and examined it in all its details, and by Friday night we had circulated it to the rest of the departments. I could not move much faster than that'.¹ This self-tribute and the constant use of the first person pronoun in his public utterances might give the impression that Bevin

¹ Ernest Bevin: *The Job to be Done*—a collection of speeches and statements p. 18.

was an egotist and that he was unable or unwilling to recognise the contributions which others had made towards the formulation and execution of his policy. That was not, however, the experience of those who worked most closely to him. He was fertile in invention but was always ready to listen to criticism. As he once said to one of his senior officers in the Ministry, 'I shall have a lot of ideas and it is your duty to advise me which of them are good and which of them are bad'. It was fortunate that he found in office at the Ministry a Permanent Secretary of mature experience, wise, tranquil and discriminating, a polished draughtsman who had to an outstanding degree the gift of lucid exposition. It would have been difficult to find two men who in disposition, outlook and education stood further apart, and it is the measure of their stature that despite these disparities they formed a working partnership in which novel and creative ideas were translated into statesmanlike and practical propositions.

To outward appearances Mr. Bevin might represent a decision as something which he had reached by his own unassisted efforts, but that was less an expression of self-satisfaction than a desire to accept full responsibility for the policy of his department and to assure his staff that he would stand by them and shield them from adverse criticism. That is one of the qualities which make a great Minister of State, and the enthusiasm with which his officers went about their work was the measure of their trust and confidence in Bevin's leadership. It was this same almost missionary sense of vocation that explained his frequent reference to the workers as 'my people'. To more sophisticated ears the words in their setting might have a crude ring: but behind them lay not the aspirations of megalomania but the sentiments of loyalty to a cause to which the speaker had pledged his tireless and lasting devotion.

Mr. Bevin's scheme, although drawn up at a speed which gave small opportunity for considered refinements, was nevertheless comprehensive in scope and reasonably precise in the measures which it advocated. Of its proposals some became the permanent basis of the mobilisation of the nation's manpower, others were superseded by more drastic alternatives or were later discarded when their impracticability had become apparent. In its general tone the memorandum was a pointer to the methods by which its author intended to set about his task and the conditions he would require to see fulfilled if it were to be accomplished. For these reasons the document merits examination.

As an introduction to his positive proposals the Minister explained that he had reviewed the measures which were being discussed within his department for ensuring that essential production was not held up through lack of the necessary labour, and had found that in the changed circumstances they were inadequate both in scope and in

their method of application. The suggestions he had seen were concerned primarily with the engineering industry, but it was essential that the problem of labour supply as it applied over the whole field of industry should be dealt with by the War Cabinet in one comprehensive decision. His first proposal was, therefore, that labour supply and the use to which labour was being put should be the responsibility of one department and one department only. Otherwise it would not be possible to relate the competing demands of different employers, including Government departments, for workers or to secure that production was moving in step over the whole field of national requirements. The Minister concurred with the decision reached at the meeting of 8th May that the Ministry of Labour should be assigned this task; indeed he regarded it as the only practicable course. If he were to be responsible for supplying workers he must be in a position to decide when a firm was asking for more labour than was justified or was using what it had uneconomically. For the discharge of these duties the personnel of his department would have to be strengthened and in particular a staff of inspectors established and armed with adequate executive powers.

To the acceptance of this responsibility the Minister attached a further important condition. It was essential that his department should know the extent of the demand for labour and should not be left with the impossible task of reconciling the conflicting demands of different departments and their contractors. A Production Council should accordingly be set up and charged with the direction of the organisation of production. In deciding the work to be put in hand it should give full consideration to all factors limiting output including the availability of labour and materials, and should where necessary determine priority between competing requirements. Moreover, as production and strategy were closely interdependent, it should be the duty of this body to translate into terms of munitions such strategical changes in the conduct of the war as might be communicated to it by the War Cabinet. This in turn would determine the number of workers which the Minister of Labour would be called upon to supply. The Council, it was suggested, should consist of the production Ministers, the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister of Labour, and should be under the chairmanship of a Cabinet Minister.

In the two following proposals the Minister moved from the supply of labour to the need for a tighter rein over contracting firms and over schemes for the expansion of factory accommodation. More establishments, beginning with those in the munitions industry, should be brought under direct Government control, he suggested, and where—as in the case of small sub-contractors—this was found inconvenient, a price-fixing system should be introduced as a means to an effective limitation of profits. This would have the advantage that it would

remove from the minds of workpeople the feeling that the extra efforts they made to speed up output were merely putting more money into the pockets of their employers. Secondly, a situation that was little short of chaotic had been allowed to develop in the building industry. Through the lack of any system for relating the building requirements of the Government to practical possibilities a large number of projects had been started with little or no hope of early completion. The only effective remedy was the establishment of a Ministry of Works, charged with the planning and control of all building and civil engineering for the Government and with the particular duty of considering, in consultation with the Production Council, the possibility of meeting requirements by using or increasing the capacity of existing factories before agreeing to the erection of new ones. Meanwhile, until the new Ministry was established the powers of the Works and Buildings Priority Sub-Committee should be strengthened by obliging all departments to obtain its sanction before placing contracts for new construction.

In his plans for the organisation of his own department one suggestion in particular seems, like the proposal for a Production Council, to have emerged from the Minister's own creative thought. He proposed, as an addition to the permanent staff of Civil Servants, to appoint a Director of Labour Supply who should be a man with an intimate knowledge and experience of management and production methods. He would be assisted by three or four industrialists drawn from employers and trade unionists, and together they would constitute a Labour Supply Board which would be in permanent session. Its duties would be to survey the total requirements for labour in the war industries and, in the light of information furnished by the Production Council, to consider the measures necessary for providing the requisite labour whether by the transfer of workers, by dilution or other means. But such a centralised authority could not be expected to operate efficiently unless it had the means of devolving its functions to local bodies. This decentralisation should be carried out in two ways. The existing Area Boards of the Ministry of Supply should in future be under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour divisional controllers—a notable indication of the place in the hierarchy of Ministries which the Minister envisaged for his own department—and should be the channel for considering and adjusting competing requirements for labour in their respective areas. Secondly, at each important centre local labour supply committees should be set up consisting of a chairman and two other members selected from industry and appointed full-time members of the Ministry's staff. It would be the duty of these committees working with the Ministry of Labour's local offices to organise and foster self-help among firms with labour supply problems, and generally to consider such questions as the admission of

women to munitions work, dilution and training, and the welfare of the workers. To assist them in their task there should be set up for each important industry a panel of industrial representatives whose members would be available to the committees for consultation. Lastly, for the detailed investigation of the problems of skilled labour including transfer of workers from one undertaking to another, training and dilution, an adequate number of technical officers—say, three hundred to four hundred—should be appointed under a chief inspector. These officials might come from within the Ministry of Labour and from other Government departments or might be found among trade unionists and managers with a technical knowledge of production.

To these main proposals the Minister added a number of related suggestions, some of which bore the marks of hasty thinking and were later dropped. Firms in particular districts should, wherever possible, be grouped and workers deemed to be in the employment of the group and not of individual firms. This, the Minister believed, would facilitate transfers. Secondly, employers in specified industries should be required to notify to the employment exchanges the names of any men discharged, stood off for lack of work, or employed short-time. It would then be the duty of the local officers to investigate the causes, take steps to overcome them, and where this was impracticable, arrange for the transfer of the men to other employment. A munitions volunteer scheme might also be introduced under which men in scarcity occupations would engage under suitable guaranteed terms of employment to transfer to such work as they were asked to undertake. More practicable and of less administrative difficulty were the proposals for a wide extension of training to which the Minister always attached the greatest importance. Entry to classes at Government Training Centres should no longer be confined to the unemployed: by extending eligibility to workers in employment the Minister hoped that men with experience of semi-skilled processes in, for example, the engineering industry might with a short period of intensive training be fitted to take skilled work. The opportunities, too, of making a wider use of technical colleges should be explored by the Labour Supply Board, while the local labour supply committees should make enquiries about the possibility of providing preliminary instruction in a particular craft in the maintenance shops of firms in their areas not engaged fully on war production, or in commercial establishments whose normal business for the home market was reduced in consequence of the war. Lastly, it was necessary to create in the minds of the workpeople confidence that the customs and practices relaxed during the war would be restored in their entirety on an appointed day closely following the cessation of hostilities. It was true that under the Agreement of August 1939 changes had to be registered by the

employer on a standard form and copies of it distributed to and retained by specified persons affected, but this in the Minister's judgement was insufficient. He accordingly proposed that there should be added to the Fair Wages Resolution of the House of Commons a clause providing that after hostilities had ceased any firms which failed to restore normal practices would be ineligible for Government contracts.¹

At the end of his memorandum the Minister indicated the steps which he thought should be taken for regulating the engagement of workers by employers. He saw little or no advantage in extending to other industries the ban which had been imposed on advertising by employers for building craftsmen; that would not cure the alleged poaching of skilled workers. Some measure of control was nevertheless necessary, but the machinery of the Control of Employment Act was too cumbrous for practical use in a situation which called for quick action. What was required was a provision that in specified industries, which should certainly include engineering, shipbuilding, building and civil engineering, all engagements of labour must be made through employment exchanges or in appropriate cases trade unions. This was as far as the Minister at first believed it would be necessary to go, and it illustrates his faith in a free labour market. Almost immediately indeed he felt himself obliged to accept a course that ran counter to his own preference, but in the execution of that policy his inclination was always to make the fullest use of persuasion and only to invoke compulsory powers when there was no other way of finding workers required for a job.

While the Minister of Labour was preparing his scheme, the Lord President of the Council (Neville Chamberlain) with his advisers was also considering the additional powers which it might be necessary to confer on the Government should the threat of invasion become imminent. When their respective plans were jointly considered by the two Ministers they were found to be generally in accordance with each other's ideas, with one important exception. Whereas in his proposals the Minister of Labour had excluded the use of compulsory powers and had limited control of engagement to the munitions and building industries, the Lord President believed that it would be necessary for the Government to exercise full control over the persons and property of all citizens. The Government would thus have the right to require the services or labour of every individual over sixteen years of age, and to obtain complete command of all means of production and defence. Developing his scheme for the control of persons, the Lord President proposed that the Minister of Labour should be given authority to

¹ The Government subsequently decided that special legislation rather than an amendment to the Fair Wages Resolution was the more appropriate measure, and the Restoration of Pre-War Trade Practices Act was passed on 26th February 1942.

direct any person in the United Kingdom over sixteen years of age to perform any service for which he was required and was capable at the rate and remuneration appropriate to the job and under conditions of employment which the Minister might himself prescribe. The Minister should also be empowered to require persons over sixteen of any class or description to register such particulars about themselves as might be wanted; to enter and inspect premises; and to oblige employers to produce such books and records as might be necessary. Lastly, as the Minister could not personally issue all his directions, he should be enabled to delegate his authority to special officers drawn from the existing staff of the Ministry or recruited from outside, who would be called National Service officers.

On 20th May the two schemes were presented to the War Cabinet for an early decision on which should be adopted and for authority to set up the machinery proposed by the Minister of Labour which, under either plan, would be needed. With the worsening situation in France the War Cabinet responded promptly and in favour of the wider and more drastic alternative. On 22nd May, as Mr. Churchill flew to France to confer with Reynaud and Weygand in an attempt to rally French resistance, the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill passed through all its stages in both Houses of Parliament.¹ In his introductory speech the Lord Privy Seal, Mr. Attlee, referred to the critical situation which had compelled the Government to ask for the special powers that it thought would be essential if the country was shortly to be faced with a state of siege or a grave national emergency. The general purpose of the Bill was to expand the existing law so as to enable regulations to be made which would give the Government complete control over persons and properties. The Minister of Labour would be empowered to direct any person to perform any service of which he was capable under terms and conditions which he would be authorised to prescribe, and existing powers of control over essential industries, which had so far been little exercised, would be extensively used and gaps in these powers would be filled. There would now be authority, not hitherto possessed, to compel an unwilling management to operate its establishment in conformity with general or particular directions given by the Government, which would so far as necessary override all other existing commitments. It was, further, the intention of the Government to name important establishments engaged on vital production for the war 'controlled establishments', and to levy on firms so controlled excess profits tax at the rate of 100 per cent.

In an atmosphere charged with a sense of imminent and unpredictable dangers the need for the extraordinary powers sought by the

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 361, Col. 154-185; H. of L. Deb., Vol. 116, Col. 381-388, 22nd May 1940.

Government was for the most part tacitly accepted. In a matter of three hours the traditional liberty of British citizens to manage their own lives and property was, by the free vote of their Parliamentary representatives, surrendered for the duration of the war to the will of a Government statutorily vested with arbitrary powers of direction. In the course of the same sitting the first Defence Regulation under the new Act, No. 58A,¹ was made by which the Minister of Labour was placed in full control of the manpower of the country. From it derived the sanction for the series of Orders by means of which the mobilisation of labour was to be consummated.

At the same hour at which the Emergency Powers Bill was being introduced in the House of Commons, the Minister of Labour met his National Advisory Council. In order that its members might be fully apprised of what was going on, he opened the conference by reading to them a document which was the basis of the statement that Mr. Attlee was concurrently making in the House. From this they would be able to understand the reasons why he had been obliged to modify his earlier scheme which had been largely prepared on the principle of voluntarism. The Minister then reviewed the different proposals contained in his plan and dwelt in particular on those dealing with dilution and training which were to him of the greatest importance and urgency. In the handling of industrial disputes, now that the bulk of the insured population would be employed by the State—which would also be the owner of many factories—the question of arbitration, he suggested, would have to be carefully considered. Some alteration, too, in the methods of adjusting wages might become necessary, but the existing joint machinery would as far as possible be kept intact. Turning to the arrangements which he was making for fostering self-help through local labour supply committees, the Minister paused to elaborate what was to be perhaps his most distinctive contribution to the whole problem of the movement of labour—his insistence on the need for giving close attention to the welfare of the workers, especially in towns and factories where there were too few existing amenities. Even at this early stage his mind was developing ideas for communal feeding, for the use of schools and halls as canteens and recreation clubs, and for proper facilities for women brought to work in factories which had previously only employed men. In a final appeal for co-operation in carrying out the disagreeable but necessary task of what was virtually the conscription of the nation the Minister in the name of the Government used these striking words. 'We came to the conclusion that with the goodwill of the Trades Union Congress, the Unions and the Employers' Federation, a little less democracy and a

¹ S.R. & O., 1940, No. 781.

little more trust in these difficult times, we could maintain to a very large degree intact the peace-time arrangements, merely adapting them to suit these extraordinary circumstances.'

After a brief discussion the Council unanimously resolved to co-operate wholeheartedly in the steps necessary to secure the protection of the country and an allied victory. It further agreed to set up a Joint Consultative Committee to advise the Minister of Labour on all matters arising out of the legislation passed by Parliament. Three days later Mr. Bevin, at the invitation of Sir Walter Citrine, attended a meeting of two thousand delegates representing every trade union in the country.¹ He explained to them his plans in detail and asked them to go back to the mines, the docks, the workshops and the farms, and tell their members the complete story, so that every worker would know what was wanted of him and should feel himself a full partner in this great enterprise. The remarkable demonstration of his massive grasp of his subject, and the appeal in the language of an old trade union leader to his people for their trustful co-operation, left no doubt of the response which in his ministerial capacity he would receive. At the end of his speech the audience gave on behalf of the trade union movement a pledge that it would use all its resources to provide the arms and munitions that were so urgently required.

Within little more than a fortnight after the fall of the Chamberlain Government a plan for the full mobilisation of the nation's manpower under the unified control of a single department of State vested with powers of direction had been devised, approved by Parliament and accepted by employers and workers alike. In its essential feature it differed little from the scheme prepared in 1936 'for a major war requiring the whole resources of the nation', which had at the time to be shelved for political reasons. But now the conditions for its successful launching had at last been realised—'a general recognition of the issues before the country, popular support for the Government, and a Government strong enough and decisive enough to make use of this popular support'.²

¹ Francis Williams: *Ernest Bevin*, p.220.

² See above p. 43.

CHAPTER VI

PROGRAMMES & REQUIREMENTS

(MAY 1940 – DECEMBER 1941)

THE PRODUCTION COUNCIL under the chairmanship of Mr. Arthur Greenwood, Minister without Portfolio, was set up on 22nd May 1940 and held its first meeting on the evening of that day. Its main duties were to translate into terms of munitions the strategic plans communicated to it by the War Cabinet, to assess the manpower required to carry out the programme, and to determine priority between particular demands where these involved competitive claims for materials and labour. The Council started its work in an atmosphere of impending disaster. The Germans had overrun the Low Countries and Northern France. The British Expeditionary Force was in danger of being cut off and within a week the evacuation from Dunkirk had begun. In these circumstances the War Cabinet decided that long term strategic planning must be abandoned; for the time being the defence of the country against the probability of early invasion was to have precedence over all other considerations. Industry must concentrate on the maximum output and earliest delivery of the types of armaments and ammunition that were most urgently required for the operational needs of the coming months.

THE PRIORITY SYSTEM

Faced with this mandate, the Production Council asked the supply departments to name the items for which there was the most immediate demand, and a list was then compiled grading the requirements in an order of priority. Aircraft, bombs and small arms ammunition were placed in the highest category (1A) closely followed by field guns and ammunition in a slightly lower category called 1B. No category 2 was formally established, but all work required by the Armed Forces which could be completed by 1st September 1940 was to rank next after 1A and 1B, and only in the last resort was it to be interrupted or stopped. Where building resources were in question, defence work and fortifications were given an over-riding priority and the War Office was granted unfettered access to excavators, building material, craftsmen and labourers wherever the Director of Fortifications could discover them. Priority of Production Directions were then issued to industry by the Ministry of Supply on behalf of all production departments, with categorical instructions that the output of the

items on the list should have precedence in their graded order over all other production. Shortages of labour should be notified to the local offices of the Ministry of Labour which had instructions to concentrate upon the filling of vacancies on priority work at the expense, if necessary, of all other outstanding claims.

This system of priorities had one positive merit. At a time of great national uncertainty, when firms were looking for official guidance, it gave instructions on what they must put first on their order books. In this way it undoubtedly helped to speed up aircraft production and to secure the completion of coast and inland defences. Even so its effect should not be exaggerated. The accelerated output of aircraft and ammunition which contributed to victory in the Battle of Britain, if initially assisted by the preferential access that the industry enjoyed to men and materials, was in large measure due to the drive and initiative of Lord Beaverbrook, whose call for all-out action following upon the news of Dunkirk caught the imagination and fired the enthusiasm of managements and workers alike.¹ Such limited advantages as may be attributed to the system of priority directions were, moreover, offset by serious disadvantages. The absolute precedence for obtaining materials and labour accorded to those sections of industry engaged on the manufacture of the types of armament included in the priority list meant serious delays in the output of hardly less important war materials. Industries, such as shipbuilding, which had no top priorities complained that those which were fortunate enough to receive them got all they wanted and were in consequence under no pressure to economise in the use of scarce materials and labour. Moreover, employment exchanges could not fairly allocate skilled workers as they became available, nor plan a systematic build-up of the labour forces of their engineering clients, so long as aircraft and ammunition firms could plead the Priority of Production Directions as authority for obtaining all the skilled workers for whom they applied, and could argue that dilution would impair the speed and efficiency of their production.

Before the Production Council was two months old the production departments, with the exception of the Ministry of Aircraft Production, were becoming dissatisfied with the priorities technique and were urging that it should be replaced by a system of allocation of materials and labour. Meanwhile the priorities list was progressively growing. Machine tools and equipment for electric grid extensions had found their way in, to be followed by radio which it was soon recognised was hardly less important than fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft guns. Tanks too and wheeled vehicles could, the War Cabinet suggested, no longer be allowed to remain in a secondary position, even if

¹ See P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter XII (i).

they were less urgently required than small arms ammunition. The list was in fact assuming dimensions which made the original purpose for which it was invented virtually unattainable. The more widely priority was accorded, the lower was the value of the privileges which it was intended to confer.

THE ALLOCATION SYSTEM

The proposal that the current system of priority directions should be superseded by a scheme for the allocation of materials and labour was referred by the Production Council to the War Cabinet early in September 1940; and a ruling was given that available resources of labour, materials and industrial capacity must be allocated proportionately to the existing programme, the basis of the allocation being determined in relation to strategic priority. The phrasing was not a model of clarity. Whereas most departments interpreted it as a decision in favour of the proposed system of allocations in place of priority directions, the Ministry of Aircraft Production contended that the established priorities still remained valid. This difference of opinion was never authoritatively resolved; and, long after priority directions had ceased to be regarded as an effective instrument, additions were proposed to the priorities list in the mistaken belief that this would accelerate the supply of labour for the new products that it was proposed to include.

Despite the ambiguities that might be read into the War Cabinet's ruling, the Production Council in general felt that it had authority to proceed on the lines which it had suggested. On the value of a scheme of allocation for the control of materials and capacity there was general agreement; of its appropriateness as a method of supplying labour the Ministry of Labour had considerable misgivings. Any set of devices, it was thought in the Ministry, which tried to tie the labour build-up to the flow of materials was impracticable, because it failed to take into account the essential differences between men and materials. The flow of orders and the flow of labour might be fairly satisfactorily matched in the aggregate over reasonably long periods, but it was by no means simple under war conditions to equate the two at any given time and place. Labour could not be allocated in packets like materials; what was wanted was a scheme by which 'bottlenecks' in production caused by a shortage of labour could be identified, and workers directed so as to enable the whole programme to go forward in step. This point of view, which the Production Directors in the supply departments found perplexing and irritating, was to remain the governing principle on which the Ministry operated its labour supply policy.¹ It had two great merits. First, it emphasised the human

¹ See P. Inman, *op.cit.*, Chapter III (iii).

element in all manpower questions, and the impropriety of treating workers as so many robots that could be directed in batches regardless of their individual lives to particular places of employment. Secondly, and no less important, it recognised the prevailing tendency of employers to ask for more, and often more highly skilled, workers than they really required. In its insistence that these claims should be first investigated locally as they arose, the Ministry showed itself alive to the necessity of conserving in its own hands the control and the economical use of the limited supply of available manpower.

On the strength of what it deemed to be the majority view of departments the Ministry of Labour in November 1940 sent out instructions to its local offices to the following effect. Although the priority lists should be treated as a general guide in the distribution of labour, local officers should be influenced by general considerations and use their own common sense. Above all, they must look out for 'bottlenecks' in production due to labour shortages and adopt every means at their disposal to remove them. This instruction introduced a much needed elasticity in the control of labour and freed it from too close an attachment to priorities and allocation of materials. In the autumn of 1941 a further step was taken by the establishment of a system of labour preferences. Instead of issuing priority directions affecting the labour requirements of whole industries or sections of industries, vacancies for workers in industrial establishments engaged on production which was of urgent importance were identified and given priority markings. The scheme was operated by a committee on which all the supply departments were represented under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour.¹ Its decisions were communicated to the employment exchanges which were thus enabled to build up their own local lists of priorities.

The provision of machinery for identifying and filling important vacancies was not, however, by itself sufficient. It was by now apparent that the war could only be won if the country, bereft of its allies, were prepared for intensive and sustained efforts on a scale hitherto unimagined. The Armed Forces would have to be rapidly expanded and concurrently the output of aircraft and munitions would have to be vastly increased. Manpower might well prove the limiting factor. It would at any rate be imprudent to embark upon ambitious programmes until estimates had been made of their human practicability. What was wanted was a manpower budget. The Ministry of Labour was engaged in working out the requirements of individual firms with the help of its labour supply inspectors, the information supplied by 'L' returns,² and the guidance of the supply departments. But there was as yet no technique for assessing the labour needs of the expanding war

¹ The Sub-Committee on Preferences in the Allocation of Labour.

² See above p. 65.

effort as a whole. The earlier estimates submitted by the Wolfe Committee were now completely out of date and had been shown by experience to have been greatly inflated. The aircraft and motor vehicle industry—for which an expansion of 117 per cent. by the summer of 1940 had been envisaged in the report—had, so the Minister of Labour was prompted to say, substantially achieved its objective with an increase of only a little more than 22 per cent. in its labour force. It was clearly time to look at the prospects afresh and in August 1940 the Production Council decided on the recommendation of the Minister of Labour to authorise a new enquiry. This task was given to an inter-departmental body called the Manpower Requirements Committee under the chairmanship of Sir William (later Lord) Beveridge, the newly appointed Manpower Commissioner. Its terms of reference were to carry out an examination of labour requirements, which was interpreted by the chairman as giving him a free hand to secure and examine statistics of both Service and civilian needs and to make recommendations on the prospect of meeting them.

THE MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE

The Committee worked fast and early in November submitted an interim report. This took the form of a broad conspectus of the competing demands of the Services and the munitions industries for manpower over the next fifteen months, and provided a rough estimate of the rate at which the latter would have to expand if equipment were to be available for the planned intake into the Armed Forces and Civil Defence. A month later the final report was presented to the Production Council. In it the arguments of the earlier memorandum were developed in some detail, and an attempt was made to bring under review the sources from which men and women could be obtained to meet the demands of the Services and war industry, and the methods by which this should be done. On three points special emphasis was laid. First, the rate of intake to the Armed Forces must be regulated in accordance with the progress being made in the production of the necessary equipment. Armaments rather than armies were the limiting factor in the whole programme. Secondly, substitutes must be provided to take the place of men withdrawn from industry for the Forces. This could only be done by bringing into employment large additional numbers of women. Lastly, if skilled and semi-skilled workers including women were to be obtained and retained in the munitions industries, often in isolated places of employment, special attention must be given to their welfare. Not only must there be adequate housing, transport and feeding, but protection must be provided outside as well as inside the factory against aerial attack, and opportunities for social activities would have to be developed. In this

Table 12: Requirements of the Forces and A.R.P. 1939-1941

	Navy		Army		R.A.F.		A.R.P.		Total		Total Men and Women
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
1. (a) Pre-war strength . . .	129,000		221,813		115,211				466,024*		
(b) Reservists and Auxiliary mobilised . . .	62,500		661,797		58,082				782,379		
2. Numbers entered up to 31st August 1940 . . .	94,200		1,105,531		240,125		182,500		1,622,356		
3. Strength at 1st September 1940	285,700	7,137	1,989,141	35,000	413,418	15,076	182,500	50,000	2,870,759	107,213	2,977,972
4. Additional requirements 1st September 1940-31st December 1941 . . .	145,755	13,000	1,203,000	25,000	353,000	46,200	40,020		1,740,775†	84,200	1,824,975
Grand Total . . .	431,455	20,137	3,192,141	60,000	765,418	61,276	222,520	50,000	4,611,534	191,413	4,802,947

Table 13: Requirements of the Munitions Industries 1939-1941

	Males		Females		Total
1. Numbers employed at June 1939 . . .	2,599,000		530,000		3,129,000
2. Numbers entered up to August 1940 . . .	220,000		181,000		401,000
3. Numbers employed at 1st September 1940 . . .	2,819,000		711,000		3,530,000
4. Additional requirements 1st September 1940-31st August 1941 . . .	580,000		890,000		1,470,000
Grand Total . . .	3,339,000		1,601,000		5,000,000

* This number includes about 56,000 recruits for regular and short service commissions and engagements who joined the Forces during 1939.
 † Including requirements of 42,759 skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen in engineering occupations.

last recommendation in particular the Committee was closely reflecting the mind of the Minister of Labour.

Table 12, derived from the Committee's report, sets out the strength of the Armed Forces and A.R.P. before the war and at the 1st September 1940, and their additional requirements down to the end of 1941. Table 13 shows the numbers employed in the munitions industries in June 1939 and at 1st September 1940, and the further increases that would be necessary in the succeeding twelve months.

From these statistics the Committee drew the following conclusions. The requirements of the Armed Forces for the period September 1940 to December 1941, after making good wastage, were in round figures $1\frac{3}{4}$ million men and 84,000 women. This would bring the total addition to the pre-war strength of the Armed Forces to approximately 4 million men and 190,000 women. The munitions industries, the definition of which was widened so as to include metal manufacture, shipbuilding and ship-repairing and the whole of the chemical industries, needed by September 1941 a net addition of 580,000 men and 890,000 women. If these requirements were met in full the total labour force in the munitions industries would be 5 millions or 118 for every 100 in the Armed Forces, as compared with 3,166,000 in these industries or 72 for every 100 in the Armed Forces in July 1918. But this did not represent the full demand that would fall on the manpower of the country. Of the total number of men that would have to be withdrawn from industry for the Services, 468,000, the Committee estimated, would have to come from the munitions industries, and these would have to be replaced by the transfer of men from outside sources. Withdrawals of men on this scale from non-munitions industries would, however, be impracticable unless every industry and service made a fair contribution, replacing men by women on every job of which women were capable and for which they could be found. This might well involve drawing into employment in the non-munitions industries some 750,000 women in addition to those required for the munitions industries and the Auxiliary Services, making a total of over $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions who would have to be found from among those at present only occupied in their homes or in such employment as catering and private domestic service.

The labour force of the munitions industries could not, however, be increased on this vast scale unless two conditions were fulfilled. First, the scarcity of skilled labour must be overcome by dilution, training, and the employment of women on engineering jobs previously performed by men. Secondly, the production departments must ensure an adequate and continuous flow of materials and machine tools, and in placing their orders or siting their new factories must pay full regard to the possibilities of obtaining labour in the areas in question. If action on these lines were vigorously pursued and if, in particular, the

necessity for a large increase in the number of women in industry were accepted, then, the Committee concluded, the manpower required for the Forces and munitions industries was not beyond the capacity of the British nation. The execution, however, of the present programme was subject to incalculable disturbance from hostile attack and no assurance could be given that it would be completed within the prescribed period.

The Committee was fully alive to the confusion and disorganisation that would arise if the withdrawal of men for the Forces and the transfer of others to the munitions industries on the scale envisaged in its report were not carefully regulated. It, accordingly, drew up a detailed table of industries and allocated to each the number of men that would have to be withdrawn whether for the Forces or munitions work. The method by which this should be done was left to be worked out, but in the view of the Committee the chief instrument would have to be the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. Considerable changes would, however, have to be made in the principles on which it was operated. Whereas hitherto a man had been automatically reserved if he was above the age specified for his particular occupation, in future it would be necessary to consider not only his age and occupation but also the importance of the work upon which he was engaged. As, moreover, the Schedule only directly affected men of military age it might, the Committee advised, be necessary to use supplementary means for regulating the movement of older workers and women. This might be done in two ways; by the restriction of less important production, and by the registration for civilian employment of workers not covered by the National Service Act.

The Beveridge report as compared with the Wolfe report of 1939¹ showed a notable advance in the technique of manpower budgeting. Although the Committee confined itself to broad indications of the additional labour that production would require and refrained from any attempt to allocate this proportionately to the needs of the three supply departments, its calculations of the total numbers that would have to be found—together with its analysis of the ways in which this might be done—gave Ministers the means of reviewing the practicability of the projected military and civilian programme as a whole. By contrast, the attempt which the Committee made to allocate to each industry the quota it should be obliged to provide for the Services and munitions industries introduced a greater degree of precision than was warranted by the data on which it was based. As subsequent criticism was to show, the numbers which it was thought some industries, especially agriculture and transport, could give up without undue damage had been seriously over-estimated. But the chief value of the

¹ See above pp. 62-63.

report did not lie in its statistical analysis. The great service which Sir William Beveridge rendered was that for the first time the manpower picture had been looked at as a whole. From his survey he drew some conclusions of outstanding importance. There would be a famine, he emphasised, of male labour for industry and a dearth of recruits for the Forces. Drastic remedies were accordingly necessary. First, a vast number of women must be brought into employment—partly to replace men, partly to do new jobs at which with training they would be no less competent than men. Secondly, the current system of reservation from call-up for the Armed Forces must be radically altered with the twofold object of finding more recruits and of ensuring that skilled men who were retained in their civilian occupations were employed only on jobs of genuine importance where their skill would be fully used. These radical recommendations were soon to become accepted aims in manpower policy.

The Beveridge report did not find its way to the War Cabinet. The Production Council—which discussed it on 19th December 1940—concluded, probably rightly, that the voluminous analytical matter, some of which was highly speculative, while of great interest to officials was more than busy Ministers could be expected to digest. It decided, therefore, to send the statistical review of industries to the departments concerned with their production, and to submit a memorandum to the War Cabinet calling its attention to the salient features in the report and inviting it to authorise the methods proposed for obtaining the necessary manpower.

CEILING FOR ARMY INTAKE

To its memorandum the Production Council appended some important misgivings. It pointed out that, if withdrawals of men for the Forces and munitions industries did not materialise on the scale and in the proportion set out in the report, the result would be a reduction in the number of divisions which the War Cabinet had agreed should be equipped and maintained. Secondly, it expressed the opinion that, even if the numbers were forthcoming from industry, it would not be possible before the end of August 1941, the date prescribed by the War Cabinet, to provide equipment for fifty-five divisions. It, therefore, suggested that the Army Council should reconsider its future plans for intake into the Army in the light of the long-term forecasts of the Ministry of Supply, when available, of the rate at which armour and equipment could be produced.

This prudent warning accorded with the War Cabinet's own hesitations about the projected size of the Army. In October it had been informed by the Minister of Labour that the existing sources from which men for the Army could be provided would dry up by March 1941, and it had decided pending the report of the Manpower

Requirements Committee to confirm the Army intake plan to that date but not beyond. The War Office, too, was apparently becoming alarmed at the possibility of a short-fall of equipment as a result of pitching its recruiting demands too high, and at the final meeting of the Production Council¹ its representatives had pointed out that there was a danger that the Army might be asked to undertake strategic commitments on assumptions about the provisions of men and equipment which could not both be realised.

In February 1941 the War Cabinet invited the Secretary of State for War and the Minister of Labour to confer together and work out a plan for intakes into the Army covering the period from April to September 1941. But before the two Ministers had gone far in their talks the Prime Minister himself reached the conclusion that a firm and absolute figure should be determined within which the Army would have to make its plans and dispositions. He realised that many of the misunderstandings that had arisen about the expansion of the Army had been due to the practice of calculating its requirements on the basis of the number of fighting divisions that could be put into the field, and omitting to make provision for the numbers that would be needed for lines of communication, training units and specialist activities. He proposed that in future the military authorities should be given a net entitlement for all purposes of approximately two million men. It would then be for them to make the best use of this material 'by wise economies, by thrifty and ingenious use of manpower, by altering establishments to fit resources'.

This was a decision of first importance in the history of manpower budgeting and the doctrine which it enunciated was to become the prescription for regulating the manpower requirements not only of the Services but also at a later date of the supply departments. The new principle had two great merits. It brought the future requirements of the Army within measurable reach of current calling-up plans, and it compelled the War Office to work to a target. A new phase had opened in the history of the allocation of manpower, but it was not destined to follow a simple course.

Following the Prime Minister's directive the approved Army ceiling was fixed at 2,195,000. But while his department was in progress of making its plans for manpower distribution on this basis, the Minister of Labour was in July 1941 reluctantly compelled to agree that it should be raised by a further 21,800 to meet the calls on the War Office to find troops for fire-watching in the Western ports and for the protection of aerodromes. Additional items, however small, were an embarrassment to those who were responsible for planning the distribution of a diminishing manpower, and the Minister asked—and

¹ See below p. 107.

the justice of his claim was admitted—that in future he should be brought into consultation before new demands for manpower were authorised by the Government. Hardly had this decision been taken when the Prime Minister was informed that after a detailed examination of its establishments the War Office was of the opinion that it would be unable to carry out its full commitments without some addition to the numbers it was authorised to recruit. He, accordingly, invited the Lord President of the Council in consultation with the responsible Ministers to examine the War Office's claim. This was for an additional 323,000 men to be found by June 1942. After protracted discussions and reference to the Prime Minister of certain undetermined issues, general agreement was reached late in September on a figure of 158,000. The authorised ceiling for the Army had thus become 2,374,800.

The harmonious settlement of this controversy was in large measure due to the tact, sympathy and resolution with which Sir John Anderson, who had been appointed Lord President in October 1940, handled the disputants. From now onwards the Lord President's Committee, which had been set up in June 1940 as a 'steering' committee for economic affairs, was to play an increasingly important part in manpower discussions, and its decisions virtually carried the weight and authority of the War Cabinet itself. Much useful work was done by the Lord President himself, who had the gift of anticipating problems before they materialised as such and who, by unofficial talks with his colleagues whether or not they were members of his Committee, was able to bring questions to his Committee in a form in which they could be discussed without acrimony and settled without undue delay.

The story of the consecutive stages by which a ceiling for intake into the Army was fixed has carried us forward to the autumn of 1941. We must now go back to the beginning of the year and examine the other important developments in policy which were discussed and approved. The Production Council died at the end of 1940 and was succeeded by a smaller body known as the Production Executive under the chairmanship of the Minister of Labour. It was given similar terms of reference to those of the Council—including the allocation of available resources of raw materials, productive capacity and labour, and the establishment of priorities where these were thought to be required.

HEADS OF LABOUR POLICY

It was to this body that in the middle of January 1941 the Minister of Labour in a memorandum entitled 'Heads of Labour Policy' submitted his plans for dealing with the serious shortages of labour. Both the diagnosis and the suggested cures reflected the mind of Sir William Beveridge, who was at the time holding an administrative post in the Ministry. The three main proposals were as follows:

- (1) The Minister of Labour might after consultation with the interested supply department declare any undertaking or part of an undertaking to be 'national work'. The following conditions would then apply. No employee would be permitted to leave and no employer to terminate the employment of a worker without the consent of the National Service officer or, in the event of an appeal against his decision, of an industrial tribunal which would be set up for this purpose. Moreover, if either wished to terminate his contract, each would be required to give the other a prescribed period of notice.
- (2) The Minister would use his powers of registration and of direction to whatever extent might be necessary to guarantee an adequate supply of labour on national work, subject to his being satisfied that the wages and conditions of employment were suitable and that there was adequate provision for the housing, feeding and transport of the workers concerned. In this connection he would be prepared straight away to direct to national work men of military age who had been placed in low medical grades, men with conscientious objections who had been conditionally exempted from call-up by tribunals, and unemployed men and women. Moreover, in order to increase the supply of available manpower he would make statutory arrangements for the registration of men and women by age groups.
- (3) The present system, by which men were reserved from call-up in virtue of their age and occupation, would be revised so that due account would also be taken of the work on which they were employed. For this purpose a Register of Protected Establishments would be compiled and skilled men employed in them would be reserved at much lower ages than those in unprotected firms.

These proposals were approved with minor modifications by the Production Executive on 20th January and later in the day received the sanction of the War Cabinet. The next day the Minister, in opening a debate on production and manpower, reviewed past achievements and described in broad outline his policy for the future. The reception was on the whole favourable, and such criticism as was made was directed not at the new proposals which were accepted as necessary, if belated, decisions but at what appeared to some speakers to be the hitherto slow progress that had been made in the mobilisation

of the manpower of the country.¹ A week later the Minister, who was accompanied by the three supply Ministers and the President of the Board of Trade, explained his ideas to his National Advisory Council, and the Council, while recognising the difficulties and hardships that would arise, generally endorsed the proposals which had been put to it.

The Heads of Labour Policy memorandum was a landmark in the history of manpower policy. From now onwards the supply and distribution of labour were to be much more firmly controlled. To this end men and women were to be required to register² and, to ensure that labour went where it was most required, directions were to be freely used. The new system by which all important production could be designated national work had overcome the scruples which the Minister had felt in directing workers to private employers. What was no less important, it also provided a means of checking what had been a serious deterrent to production, namely, the uncontrolled movement of workers within industry.

(i)

Manpower Survey (Autumn 1941)

The Production Executive took over the Production Council's committees with some alteration in their respective functions; in particular the old Manpower Sub-Committee of the Council, which had seldom met, reappeared as the Manpower Committee of the Executive and absorbed the Manpower Requirements Committee, of which Sir William Beveridge had been chairman. The new committee became an active body and in 1941 played a considerable part in the shaping of manpower policy. Its first task was to consider the Ministry of Labour's proposals, which will be described in Chapter IX, for giving effect to the recommendation in the manpower report that, in future, reservation should be made progressively dependent not only on a man's age and occupation but also on the importance of the work he was doing. The most responsible duty, however, it was assigned was to make a comprehensive review of the whole manpower situation. The decision to have another survey made was reached by the War Cabinet in July 1941, chiefly because the proposals contained in the Beveridge manpower report of the numbers the different industries should be required to release for the Forces and munitions were based upon insufficient data and were in detail open to a good deal of criticism. What was wanted was an up-to-date accurate analysis of the distribution of civilian manpower, and for this the forthcoming exchange of

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 363, Col. 81-150, 209-256 and especially 266.

² See below, p. 144.

Table 14: Service demands and industrial demands for labour—12 months ending June 1942

Services	Males	Females	Total	Industry	Males	Females	Total
Navy	110,000	11,000	121,000	Shipbuilding and ship-repairing	8,500	—	8,500
Army	405,000	205,000	610,000	Engineering and allied industries	95,000	115,000	210,000
R.A.F.	200,000*	140,000	340,000	Motors and aircraft	126,500	115,000	241,500
Civil Defence and Women's Land Army etc.	37,000†	106,000	143,000	Chemicals, explosives, etc. (including filling factories)	35,000	128,000	160,000
				Total of munitions demand	262,000	358,000	620,000
				<i>Other needs</i>			
				Mining and metal manufacture	12,000	—	12,000
				Timber production	6,000	—	6,000
				Land drainage	10,000	—	10,000
				Administrative and clerical staff for war (mainly munitions) industries	25,000	102,000	127,000
Grand Total	752,000‡	462,000	1,214,000	Grand Total	315,000	460,000	775,000

* Reduced from 247,000.

† Reduced from 67,000.

‡ This total was subsequently raised to 778,000, see below p. 16a.

insurance books in July would provide the most reliable information. Against this it would then be possible to set the requirements of the Services and the munitions industries and to strike, it was hoped, a balance between supply and demand.

With the Army intake settled to the middle of June 1942 one of the obstacles in the way of preparing a balance sheet of the national manpower resources was removed. By October 1941 the Ministry of Labour had completed the survey which it was making on behalf of the Manpower Committee, and it is significant that it was presented not to the Production Executive but to the Lord President's Committee. The survey fell into three main parts. In the first the demands for manpower down to mid-summer 1942 were analysed. For the three Services and Civil Defence the listed figures were those that had been agreed with the Lord President by the Ministers concerned and, except for the Navy, were a reduction of the original claims put forward. In the munitions field large numbers of skilled and unskilled workers were wanted to increase the output of aircraft, guns and tanks, and for filling shells in the Royal Ordnance Factories. The allocations proposed by the Ministry of Labour were arrived at by assessing in terms of manpower the programmes submitted by the three supply departments in conjunction with the information collected from employers about their future needs. The resulting estimates, although set out with precision in the survey, were necessarily speculative and those for aircraft had, as we shall see, to be substantially raised when the Ministry of Aircraft Production put forward an ambitious programme for increasing the output of heavy bombers. In addition to the munitions industries it is further noteworthy that in the survey small allocations of labour were made for three essential industries, viz., mining, tree felling and land drainage.

The total demands for manpower were set out as shown in Table 14.

In the second part of the survey the statistics showing the recent distribution of the working population were presented in a much more general form (see Table 15).

It had apparently not been found possible to do more than give the broadest indications of the distribution of manpower between different industries. Men and women were grouped together, and in the totals assigned to the composite groups of metals, chemicals and explosives no attempt was made to indicate the numbers thought to be employed on contracts for the different supply departments. Nevertheless, despite these disappointing defects the analysis was not without value. It at least revealed the interesting fact that the total number engaged on work for the civilian population was approximately as large as the numbers in the munitions industries, Government services and the Armed Forces taken together. This might well encourage the belief that further withdrawals could be made from the former without undue

detriment to the home economy. In addition to the general statistics of distribution, an examination was also made of the industries in which fit men of military age were to be found. Of a total estimated at 3½ millions, 2,600,000 it was calculated were in the groups classified as munitions and other essential industries, while the remaining 900,000 were engaged on less essential forms of employment. In the latter category building and civil engineering and the distributive trades accounted for more than half of the total.

Turning to the sources from which the additional manpower might be obtained it was estimated that under the existing call-up arrangements 468,000 men were available to meet the 778,000 required for the Armed Forces and Civil Defence. This left a deficiency of 310,000. It was at first thought by the Ministry of Labour that it would be possible to fill this gap by further withdrawals from industry, provided that a stricter system of reservations and deferments were applied. Subsequently it was agreed at the Lord President's Committee that withdrawals on this scale would put too great a strain on industry and that the pool of potential recruits would have to be widened by the call-up of younger men under the age of nineteen and by the extension of the liability of military service to higher age classes. Further, it seemed

Table 15: Estimated division of manpower (male and female) between Government, Export and Home Uses: July 1941 (Great Britain)

	Numbers	Per cent. of total	
1. Armed Forces	3,430,000	15·9	
2. Civil Defence	380,000		
3. Munitions and Government Services	8,050,000	33·5	
National and Local Government (including Civil Defence and Post Office)			690,000
Construction of new capital equipment			1,290,000
Other engineering, metals, metal goods, shipbuilding, chemicals and explosives			3,740,000
Clothing, textiles and leather equipment			710,000
Miscellaneous equipment, food, transport and services			1,620,000
4. Exports	760,000	3·2	
5. Home Market and services to civilian popu- lation	11,050,000	46·0	
6. Insured unemployed	330,000	1·4	
Total occupied population	24,000,000	100·0	

unlikely that the demands for women for the Auxiliary Services could be met, unless some measure of compulsion was applied to them on the same lines as it had been to men under the National Service Acts. These proposals, which were debated at great length in the Lord President's Committee, involved political issues of major importance. The Lord President, accordingly, drew up a memorandum in which he summarised the salient features in the survey. He emphasised how great a burden would be placed upon the home front if the requirements of the Armed Forces and the munitions industries were to be met in full, and invited the War Cabinet to sanction a series of practical measures some of which would involve legislation.

Of these recommendations the most difficult proved to be the proposed conscription of women for the Auxiliary Services. Among the younger classes which would be required to register there would be many who would be quite unsuited to life in the Services and it would be altogether wrong, it was argued, to force them to join up. After prolonged discussion the War Cabinet eventually agreed that there was no other practical means of obtaining sufficient recruits for the Women's Services and authorised the introduction of the necessary legislation with the following safeguards. Conscription would not apply to married women; no woman would be posted to a combatant service except as a volunteer; and the same facilities for obtaining postponement and deferment and for considering conscientious objections as were available for men would also be available for women. It was further resolved that, when the clauses in the Bill dealing with compulsory recruitment of women were being considered in Parliament, it should be made clear that the present intention of the Government was to proclaim only the age groups between 20 and 30, and that when women were called up they should be given an option between the Auxiliary Services, Civil Defence and certain specified jobs in industry.

At the same time the War Cabinet accepted the other proposals contained in the Lord President's memorandum. National Service obligations would be placed upon all men and women between the ages of 18 and 60. Young men of 18½ were to be called up to the Forces and the upper age limit of conscription for men was to be raised to 51. The shelter of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was to be withdrawn by stages, and in future deferment on the merits of the job would be the only protection against enlistment. Lastly, the direction of women into industry was to be more vigorously applied and a serious attempt made to draw a large number of married women into work of national importance.

Most of these important decisions were the development of proposals that, if not explicitly drawn up, were at least implicit in the policy programme which the Minister of Labour had presented to his colleagues in January 1941. But there was one significant addition: the

Table 16: Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain

Thousands

	June 1939	June 1940	June 1941	Increase (+) or Decrease (-)			
				June 1939- June 1940		June 1939- June 1941	
				Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
(i) Males aged 14-64							
Armed Forces	480	2,218	3,278	+1,738	+362.1	+2,798	+582.9
Civil Defence, N.F.S. & Police	80	292	324	+ 212	+265.0	+ 244	+305.0
Industry: Group I	2,600	2,885	3,140	+ 285	+ 11.0	+ 540	+ 20.8
Group II	4,096	3,902	3,856	- 194	- 4.7	- 240	- 5.9
Group III	6,387	5,373	4,524	-1,014	- 15.9	-1,863	- 29.2
Total employed in industry.	13,083	12,160	11,520	- 923	- 7.1	-1,563	- 11.9
Total—Forces, Civil Defence etc. and industry	13,643	14,670	15,122	+1,027	+ 7.5	+1,479	+ 10.8
Registered insured unemployed	1,013	434	100	- 579	- 57.1	- 913	- 90.1
Total working population	14,656	15,104	15,222	+ 448	+ 3.1	+ 566	+ 3.9
(ii) Females aged 14-59							
Women's Auxiliary Services	—	55	105	+ 55	—	+ 105	—
Civil Defence, N.F.S. & Police	—	53	59	+ 53	—	+ 59	—
Industry: Group I	506	674	1,100	+ 168	+ 33.2	+ 594	+117.4
Group II	587	716	989	+ 129	+ 22.0	+ 402	+ 68.5
Group III	3,744	3,863	3,759	+ 119	+ 3.2	+ 15	+ 0.4
Total employed in industry.	4,837	5,253	5,848	+ 416	+ 8.6	+1,011	+ 20.9
Total—Forces, Civil Defence, etc. and industry	4,837	5,361	6,012	+ 524	+ 10.8	+1,175	+ 24.3
Registered insured unemployed	257	211	98	- 46	- 17.9	- 159	- 61.9
Total working population	5,094	5,572	6,110	+ 478	+ 9.4	+1,016	+ 19.9
(iii) Total—Males and Females							
Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services	480	2,273	3,383	+1,793	+373.5	+2,903	+604.8
Civil Defence, N.F.S. & Police	80	345	383	+ 265	+331.3	+ 303	+378.8
Industry: Group I	3,106	3,559	4,240	+ 453	+ 14.6	+1,134	+ 36.5
Group II	4,683	4,618	4,845	- 65	- 1.4	+ 162	+ 3.5
Group III	10,131	9,236	8,283	- 895	- 8.8	-1,848	- 18.2
Total employed in industry.	17,920	17,413	17,368	- 507	- 2.8	- 552	- 3.1
Total—Forces, Civil Defence, etc. and industry	18,480	20,031	21,134	+1,551	+ 8.4	+2,654	+ 14.4
Registered insured unemployed	1,270	645	198	- 625	- 49.2	-1,072	- 84.4
Total working population	19,750	20,676	21,332	+ 926	+ 4.7	+1,582	+ 8.0

NOTES: See foot of opposite page.

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

conscription of women. To this, as to other forms of compulsion, the Minister had been a reluctant convert. Now that he was convinced of the necessity he was prepared to execute his revised policy with vigour and determination tempered always with that humane regard for the individual worker which was an essential part of himself.

(ii)

Changes in Manpower Distribution (1939-1941)

We may conclude this chapter with a conspectus of the changes that had been effected in the distribution of manpower between the outbreak of war and the middle of 1941. The main source of information is the statistical evidence compiled by the Ministry of Labour from the annual exchange of insurance books and summarised in Table 16.¹ From this some broad and reasonably reliable conclusions can be drawn of the progress that had so far been made in the mobilisation of the human resources of the country. Let us pick out the more striking achievements. First and foremost was, of course, the vast growth in the strength of the Armed Forces, which since the summer of 1939 had increased by more than two and three-quarter millions, while some hundred thousand women had been enrolled in the Auxiliary Services. Secondly, over the same period the total working population had risen by one and a half millions—half a million men and a million women—and the register of the insured unemployed, which at the beginning of the war stood at over 1,200,000, had been reduced to the negligible total of just under 200,000. Thirdly, within industry there had been an extensive redeployment of workers. The munitions industries had increased their labour force by over a million in more or less equal proportions of men and women. By contrast, the less essential industries had lost not far short of two million men who had

¹ More detailed information is given in the Statistical Appendix, Table I.

NOTES: (Table 16)

1. The figures include employers and self-employed persons as well as employees, but exclude those in private domestic service. Part-time women workers are included, two being counted as one unit.

2. Until 1943 the three industry groups were classified as munitions industries, essential industries and less essential industries. From 1943 onwards they were called Groups (I), (II), and (III) respectively and for the sake of consistency this classification has been used for all the tables of distribution of manpower in this volume.

3. Group I covers metal manufacture, engineering, motors, aircraft and other vehicles, shipbuilding and ship-repairing, metal goods manufacture, chemicals, explosives, oils, etc. Group II covers agriculture, mining, national and local government services, gas, water and electricity supply, transport and shipping.

Group III covers food, drink and tobacco, textiles, clothing and other manufactures, building and civil engineering, distributive trades, commerce, banking, and other services.

been called up for the Forces, or to a much smaller extent, transferred to munitions work.

Striking as is this bare record of global increases and decreases in the labour forces of the main industrial groups, it conceals a much wider redeployment of workers that was going on through the machinery of the Ministry of Labour. To take an example—the table shows that the male labour force of the essential industries had declined by 240,000, but in addition to this net reduction considerable changes in personnel had also taken place. Men had been withdrawn for munitions employment and their places filled by older or less qualified men, who had in turn been withdrawn from less essential occupations. Again, within the munitions industries themselves there had been a substantial turnover of skilled men. At first no doubt this was largely due to the pursuit of higher wages but, when the labour supply inspectorate had been set up, numbers of skilled men had been moved from less to more important jobs. Despite these re-allocations there was still, as there continued to be throughout the war, an absolute shortage of skilled workers, but there are indications that in 1941 employers were doing much more than in the previous year to solve their own resulting difficulties, by accepting dilution and by training the inexperienced workers they received to adapt themselves quickly to their new jobs.

But despite the considerable scale on which labour was transferring from less important occupations to employment more closely connected with the war effort, was the supply of manpower in 1941 keeping pace with the demands of the munitions programme? This question cannot be answered by a simple affirmative or negative. The situation varied from region to region. Where contracts had been placed in areas with an available supply of local labour the indications are that production was not being seriously held up through lack of labour alone. On the other hand in the congested centres of production, notably in the Midlands and Lancashire, there were large outstanding demands for labour, and Royal Ordnance Factories situated in isolated areas were not getting the women they wanted, while the rate of wastage was high. Failure to provide the required workers was not due to any lack of energy on the part of the local offices of the Ministry of Labour. Consistently with the maintenance of what was at the time regarded as a reasonable standard of civilian life and comfort they had searched their registers for workers who might be transferred from their present occupation and, if necessary, directed to take jobs away from home. But the supply of labour was running short and the programme of munitions was still mounting. It was inescapable that policy would have to become tougher. Less essential industries would have to be further combed out and the supply of mobile women would somehow have to be increased. This was the legacy of 1941.

CHAPTER VII

THE APPLICATION OF CONTROLS TO CIVILIAN MANPOWER—1940

ON 22ND MAY 1940 Parliament had recognised the need to put the Government in unchallengeable control of the human and material resources of the country, and the Defence Regulation made the same day had given the Minister of Labour power to order men and women according to their capabilities to perform such services as might be required of them. The next task was to translate principle into practice by methods which by their equity would command the assent of public opinion. The test of the country's acceptance of compulsion would come when the ways in which it was being exercised became apparent. It was, therefore, essential that, before directions began to be used, sound working criteria of the circumstances in which their issue would be justified should be drawn up and applied with judicious sympathy. If the early cases in which individual workers were required to go to a particular place of employment stood up successfully to critical investigation, such extensions of the practice as the national situation might later necessitate would be less likely to be questioned on the score of inequity or inhumanity.

Considerations like these accorded well with the Minister of Labour's own predilections. He had been reluctant to agree to the principle of compulsion and, now that it was accepted policy, he was determined to limit its application to cases of absolute necessity. Employment exchange officers should, he laid down, continue to use all their persuasive resources to find voluntary workers to fill important vacancies. If they were unsuccessful and felt they must resort to directions, then before issuing them they must satisfy him that the employment to which it was proposed to send a worker was in an industry in which agreed scales of wages had been determined by joint negotiation, and that in the area in which he would be working suitable lodgings, food and other amenities would be provided. This insistence on the welfare of the worker which dominated the Minister's mind was in the long run to prove its wisdom. Its immediate effect was no doubt to slow down the rate at which vacancies might have been filled by directed persons. On the other hand, if directions had been issued more freely and with less regard for welfare conditions, the result might well have been a growing dissatisfaction among the transferred workers with no compensating increase of productive output. As it was, when in the

winter of 1940-41 the inadequacy of a voluntary system tempered with a small admixture of compulsion as a means of distributing labour was exposed, welfare services were developing and plans for the running of hostels under a National Service Hostels Corporation were reaching maturity.¹ A revised policy in which directions would be more freely used could thus be applied under conditions that were satisfactory to the Minister and would be generally felt by the workers to be equitable.

In the summer of 1940 the Ministry of Labour was confronted with the task of devising the best methods of putting into effect the policy decisions that its new Minister had taken. The simplest of these involved administrative changes in the internal organisation of the Ministry. The more complex related to labour supply and in this wide field there were three problems of outstanding importance. The first was the perennial shortage of skilled labour, which called urgently for measures to ensure a full and economical use of the available supply, a more rapid and widespread adoption of upgrading, and increasing facilities for training the semi-skilled and unskilled. Secondly, there was the problem of the location of industry. Despite the insistence of the Ministry of Labour that orders should be placed where there was a sufficient supply of local labour, fresh contracts continued almost inevitably to be given by the supply departments to experienced firms in congested labour areas. Moreover, to counteract the actual and potential danger of aerial attack new armament factories were springing up in comparatively isolated districts. All this would necessitate the transfer of workers from easier labour areas and steps would have to be taken to encourage and increase mobility. Lastly, it was hardly less important to check a growing tendency among workers to leave their jobs whether in search of higher wages or to escape from bombs, and to devise means by which vital production and services would not be held up by loss of essential labour. In addition to these problems, which particularly affected the munitions and building industries, there was another of a different kind. With a view to reducing home consumption the Board of Trade had begun to issue Limitation of Supply Orders,² and less labour would be required by manufacturers for the home market. If a consequential increase of unemployment were to be obviated, the incidence of the cuts would have to be regulated so that it would fall mainly in areas where alternative employment was or could be made available to the workers affected.

In describing how these different problems were handled December 1940 makes a convenient dividing line. In the preceding six months the Ministry of Labour was feeling its way and relying mainly on its powers of persuasion with employers and workers, supported by a small number of Orders imposing compulsion within defined limits.

¹ See further below pp. 400-401.

² E. L. Hargreaves and M. M. Gowing: *Civil Industry and Trade*, Chapter V *passim*.

From the beginning of the new year a new approach was made and the threat of compulsion became an instrument of mobilisation. This chapter will describe the methods by which the Ministry of Labour dealt with the heterogeneous problems that arose in the latter half of 1940: the following chapter will contain an account of the new controls that were introduced in 1941.

(i)

Internal Organisation

In his first memorandum of May 1940 to the War Cabinet the Minister of Labour had outlined the administrative changes which he thought would be required inside his own department for the efficient control and distribution of manpower, and his plan had been generally approved. Little time was lost in putting these into effect. Four Labour Supply Directors were appointed,¹ two of them employers with experience of management and two of them prominent trade unionists, and formed a Labour Supply Board of which, contrary to his original intention, the Minister decided himself to be the chairman. Frequent meetings, which were attended by the senior officers of the department, were held. At these, discussions ranged over the whole field of labour supply; progress reports from the different departments of the Ministry were reviewed and further action was initiated or recommended to the Production Council, of which the Board was in effect the general purposes committee. In addition each of the four directors was given a special field in which he should take a personal interest. Of the two employers' representatives one was made responsible for training and welfare, the other for following up decisions made by the Production Council on regional organisation for production; of the trade unionists one was to act as liaison between the Ministry and the unions, and the other in virtue of his past experience was to concern himself with the labour problems in the building industry. The assignment of these special functions was an indication of the advantages which the Minister believed would accrue from his experiment of appointing industrialists to advise him on the planning of an effective labour supply policy.

For the handling of the detailed questions that would inevitably arise decentralisation was the obvious expedient. The Area Boards of the Ministry of Supply, on which the production departments and the Board of Trade were represented by their regional officers, were reconstituted and placed under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour divisional controllers. The intention of the Minister of Labour

¹ Major-General K. C. Appleyard, A. P. Young, J. C. Little and R. Coppock.

was that the Boards should determine questions of local capacity and labour supply in relation to the contracts placed in their areas by the different Ministries, and as far as possible resolve conflicting priorities; but difficulties immediately arose. The production departments were not prepared, no doubt for good reasons, to give their regional officers authority for a general supervision of the execution of the production programme in their areas. Control, in their judgement, must remain in the hands of their production directors in London. Nor were they willing to furnish their regional representatives with information about priority attaching to different items in the programme, although strangely enough they saw no objection to giving it to the Ministry of Labour's divisional controllers in their capacity as chairmen of the Boards. This part of the scheme of decentralisation, therefore, got off to a bad start from which it never fully recovered. Relatively more successful was the experiment of setting up local labour supply committees at the main industrial centres in the country. They were given the task of organising the supply of labour to the munitions industries and of encouraging the fullest possible use of upgrading, dilution and training. On each committee there were in addition to the exchange manager three other members—a chief labour supply officer and two other labour supply officers, who were selected from persons with a practical working knowledge of industry and who were appointed temporary officers of the Ministry of Labour. It was not always easy to find suitably qualified men who were also willing to serve, and for this reason some committees were less successful than others. Early in 1942 their functions were taken over by the newly-formed District Manpower Boards.

To investigate the uses to which skilled labour was being put and to promote the most beneficial distribution of the available supply, a labour supply inspectorate was set up. Some difficulties were found in obtaining candidates with the necessary technical and other qualifications, but by August some two hundred appointments had been made. The great majority of the inspectors were employed in the munitions industries, but six were specially selected for the building and civil engineering industries. After some experiments the labour supply munitions inspectorate was organised on the following broad plan. At the head was a chief inspector stationed at headquarters and responsible to the Labour Supply Board. Next came the divisional inspectors who were responsible to the divisional controllers while also reporting to the chief inspector, and each of them had under him a team of inspectors and assistant inspectors. It was the duty of the divisional inspectors to give technical advice to the controllers, the Area Boards and labour supply committees and generally to direct and supervise the investigations carried out by the inspectors on their staff. When visiting a firm an inspector was instructed to examine the jobs on

which skilled workers were being employed and, if he found that their skill was being wastefully used, to discuss with the management ways in which this might be corrected—by, for example, training semi-skilled workers to carry out some of the processes—and to obtain by agreement the release of a number of craftsmen. If the management proved intractable, the inspector's recommendations were to be submitted through the divisional inspector to the controller, who in his capacity as National Service officer would then decide whether to withdraw the redundant workers and direct them to fill other vacancies.

A further addition to the Ministry's functions reflected the Minister's solicitude for the well-being of the worker. By an Order in Council responsibility for the administration of the Factories Acts was transferred for the period of the war from the Home Secretary to the Minister of Labour.¹ This involved the transfer of all the factory inspectors from the Home Office to the Ministry of Labour, which set up a Factory and Welfare Department charged with making arrangements for the health and welfare of workers both inside and outside the factories.² To assist it in its duties and to stimulate plans for communal feeding, billeting and the provision of entertainment and other social amenities, a Factory and Welfare Advisory Board, whose members included representatives of voluntary organisations and trade unions, was set up under the Minister's own chairmanship. Before long welfare officers were appointed, some of whom were stationed at divisional offices, while others were attached to local labour supply committees to work in co-operation with local authorities and voluntary societies. The value of this new service was to be abundantly proved when, at a later stage in the war, workers sent into strange towns were met at the railway station and escorted to billets and hostels.

From this short account of internal developments it will be seen that the Ministry of Labour and National Service embarked upon its new responsibilities with an organisation embracing an enlarged range of functions, strengthened in personnel, and vested with commanding powers. With this acquisition of authority it might perhaps be thought that its task of mobilising the manpower of the country would be relatively simple after the new machine had got into working order. That might no doubt have been true if the human element in the problem were discounted, and the transfer of labour were seen as the movement of so many units of production. But if, as Mr. Bevin profoundly believed, the contentedness of the worker was an essential condition of effective labour and service, no hard and fast rules untempered by regard for his particular circumstances could determine

¹ S.R. & O. 1940, No. 907, 7th June, 1940.

² See below p. 395.

the duties that the individual might reasonably be required to undertake. It was this conviction that made the Minister hesitant in granting permission to issue directions and inclined him to exploit all the artifices of persuasion before resorting to compulsion. It was a policy of trial but not necessarily of error.

(ii)

Problems of Labour Supply

THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY¹

Among the first questions to which the Minister gave his attention was the scarcity and alleged misuse of skilled labour. Complaints were still widespread that employers were poaching from each other and that workers were frequently changing their jobs in the expectation of higher earnings, not only in the engineering but also in the building industries. To check these abuses the Minister on 5th June made an Order under Defence Regulation 58A, which was known as the Undertakings (Restriction on Engagement) Order.² In future all engagements in the engineering, building and civil engineering industries had to be made through an employment exchange or a trade union approved for the purpose, and a ban was placed upon advertisements by employers for workers in these industries. Two positive advantages derived from these provisions. From the obligation on employers to notify their vacancies the exchanges were able to get a fuller picture of the total labour demands in their areas; and, secondly, they could use their powers of persuasion upon workers applying for employment to go to the jobs that it was most desirable to fill. This canalising of available labour through the exchanges did undoubtedly mitigate waste and to a limited extent achieved a better redistribution of skilled workers.

It was soon apparent, however, that poaching had not been effectively stopped. Workers who wanted to move were getting themselves voluntarily dismissed and were then, despite the Order, being taken on by another employer. This was illustrated by the B.T.H. Magneto Factory at Coventry, which complained that from one-third to two-thirds as many workers as were engaged each week were leaving their factory. They had attempted to check this outflow by telling the workers that before they were given their cards they must apply to the employment exchange, but this device had proved fruitless because the exchange had not been given the authority to make the men stay in their jobs. When the matter was reported to the Minister he decided

¹ See further P. Imnan: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter III.

² S.R. & O. 1940, No. 877.

to make full use of his compulsory powers. He directed that if any employer was found taking on men who had left the B.T.H. factory he was to be prosecuted, and in future the practice by which men leaving one priority job were placed in another was to stop. The men were to be directed to return to their original employment. In September another attempt was made to tighten up the working of the Order, but a period of intensive air-raids created new difficulties.

By October the turnover of labour in London and Coventry had reached alarming dimensions. Skilled men, knowing that there were important war jobs in safer areas, were drifting away from factories which were exposed to the continuous threat of bombs. It was difficult to trace their whereabouts and, if when found they were employed on no less important work than that which they had left, it was a moot question whether they should be ordered to return. The direction would probably be flouted and, if (as might well be the case) the worker could show that his former home or lodging had been destroyed, it was unlikely that a prosecution would succeed. A sharp controversy ensued between the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Ministry of Labour on how this loss of skilled men should be stopped. The former urged the necessity for a new regulation on the model of the Leaving Certificates of the First World War in a form that would be acceptable to Labour, while the latter maintained that what was most required was a better handling of workers within the factories. It was not till January 1941 that a way out of the difficulty was provided through the Essential Work Order—one of the most important and comprehensive manpower measures of the war.¹

In their task of redistributing skilled workers the employment exchanges were at first handicapped by the system of priority of production directions which the Production Council had initiated. As long as the demands of firms whose particular output had been granted the highest preference for labour were unsatisfied, the exchanges had no option but to go on submitting workers, even although the reports of labour supply inspectors made it clear that skilled labour was not being fully used or was being employed on work which less skilled men could perform. The difficulties were greatest in the aircraft firms, and in July 1940 the issue was raised in correspondence, that was not without personal animus, between the two Ministers. Lord Beaverbrook pointed out that though his methods were tending to waste of labour they were providing more aircraft, and he suggested that, if the Minister of Labour was really determined to withdraw aircraft workers, the transference should be carried out by officials of the Ministry of Aircraft Production. To this Mr. Bevin replied that it was his responsibility to see that the skilled labour of the country was

¹ See below, pp. 137-143.

distributed to the best advantage and if, as he believed, there were workers standing idle or only half-employed in aircraft firms, he reserved the right to call on this labour at least temporarily for other urgent work. This was a duty which the War Cabinet had laid upon him and he could not absolve himself from carrying it out. When the matter came to the Production Council the Minister of Labour's attitude was upheld, but as a concession he agreed that before any transfers took place the local officials of the Ministry of Aircraft Production should be consulted.

The unsuitability of the priority system as a means of supplying labour was not, however, confined to production in the IA Class. Priority of a lower degree had been granted to groups of products required by more than one production department, and between the different contracts Ministry of Labour inspectors had no means of determining which were the more urgent. The situation was further complicated by the multitude of products made by individual firms which carried varying degrees of priority. It had been intended that the Area Boards should resolve these difficulties, but as the supply departments were unwilling to give their regional representatives the requisite information, this hope proved abortive. The position remained unchanged until in the autumn the system of priority directions was virtually terminated, and the Ministry of Labour instructed the employment exchanges to use their commonsense and discretion in meeting the requirements of firms from the limited supply of skilled labour in their localities.¹

In the early days of their appointment labour supply inspectors came in for a good deal of criticism. In some quarters it was alleged that their approach was too timid, in others that it was too impetuous and dictatorial. These criticisms no doubt represented respectively the views of firms which could not get the labour they wanted, and of firms which were being asked to give up workers with whom they were reluctant to part; generally speaking, when allowance is made for inexperience of what to many was a novel type of work, the inspectors were in fact acquitting themselves with considerable credit. Apart from the opposition they encountered in attempting to remove redundant skilled workers engaged on priority work, there was the further difficulty of deciding how many skilled workers should be given up by firms which, although accorded no priority, were of importance to the export and home market. At the end of August an attempt was made to codify the experience gained and inspectors were in particular instructed that, in determining whether a worker was essential, the possibility of replacing him by an elderly or alien substitute should first be carefully examined.

¹ See above p. 100.

With all the hurdles that had to be overcome, the pace at which skilled labour was being redeployed was necessarily slow, and there were good grounds for thinking that much of it was still not being used to the best advantage. It was, accordingly, decided in August to make an Order for the registration of skilled workers in a limited number of engineering occupations.¹ In its application the Order was two-sided. Every worker in any of the named occupations, whatever the nature of his employer's business, was instructed to register at the nearest employment exchange unless he was employed wholly on Government work. If he was in doubt about the extent to which he was so engaged, he should ask his employer who was required by the Order to give him the necessary information. As a cross-check every employer was obliged to submit to the employment exchange in his district a list of the names and occupations of all men in his employment who to his knowledge were not wholly engaged on Government work, together with a certificate that every other employee in these occupations was so employed. Further, with a view to tracing skilled men who had gone into other forms of employment, the Order instructed all men under sixty-five years of age to register if they had during the last ten years been employed for at least twelve months in any of the named occupations. The object of this industrial registration was to enable the employment exchanges to compile a list of men in their localities who, although possessing skill in demand for munitions production, were otherwise employed—so that they might examine the possibility of transferring some of them to vital war work. Some 270,000 men actually employed in the named occupations registered, as compared with 216,000 returned by employers as not wholly on Government work; 616,000 were certified as being wholly so employed. The difference between the workpeople's registrations and the employers' returns no doubt indicated that a number of workers, although wholly on Government work, had nevertheless decided to register their names. In addition there were 50,000 registrations from men who had previously had experience of working in these particular skilled occupations but were now otherwise employed. A total of some 260,000 skilled engineering workers not engaged wholly on Government work was no doubt a considerable stock upon which to draw, but included in it were workers engaged in engineering for export and as maintenance men in a number of other vital industries and services. Many of these would have to be left in their existing jobs and the number remaining available for transfer would, it was reckoned, fall considerably short of the demand. Should this prove true, then the deficiency could only be made good by changes in the current production methods of supply departments and their contractors.

¹ The Industrial Registration Order, 7th August 1940, (S.R. & O. 1940, No. 1459).

Meanwhile other efforts were made to narrow the gap between supply and demand, and to promote the better redistribution of labour. About 9,000 skilled workers who, it was felt, would be doing more useful work with their previous civilian employers were temporarily released from the Army. Appeals were also made by the A.E.U. to their retired members over sixty-five years of age to offer their services, but the response was comparatively small. Furthermore, a stimulus was given to dilution and, as a means of fitting workers to do jobs which did not call for the full skill of the craftsman, labour supply inspectors were instructed to impress upon employers the need to provide facilities for training in their own establishments. More Government Training Centres were also set up and the classes were no longer confined to the unemployed, but were made available also to men in relatively unskilled employment who were suitable and willing to try to learn a skill. The progress made was, however, unequal. Many of the bigger firms developed satisfactory schemes on an extensive scale, but the smaller employers found difficulty in providing the accommodation or sparing the instructors. The expansion of Government Training Centres too encountered a number of obstacles. Instructors were slow in responding to appeals for their services, machine tools were scarce, and there was no great enthusiasm among workers to apply to be admitted to courses.¹ With a view to getting more volunteers a public appeal was launched towards the end of the year addressed to men above call-up age, and to those who had registered for military service and had been placed in medical grades III and IV. Lastly, as a means of effecting a better distribution especially of skilled labour, a system of grants was introduced for workers who were willing to leave their homes to fill important vacancies. This included travelling fares, lodging allowances for married men, financial assistance to enable them to remove their families when they had found suitable accommodation near their place of work, and loans to transferred workers to cover their necessary expenses pending the receipt of their first week's wages.

THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

The expanding programme of defence works and new factories placed a severe strain upon the resources of the building industry and called for a greater mobility among its workers. To help to overcome the obstacles to transfers arising from different local rules and conditions of employment, a joint agreement of the building and civil engineering industries known as the Uniformity Agreement was signed in June 1940; it was designed to ensure uniform wages and hours of work on Government jobs during the war. Soon afterwards a committee of representatives of the two industries was set up to advise the

¹ See below p. 375.

Ministry on problems of labour supply, and six inspectors were appointed to attend to matters including transport and accommodation affecting the conditions of employment on particular sites.

One of the chief problems was the high rate of labour turnover, particularly on projects in remote areas. A striking example was in the Orkneys, where important Admiralty contracts were being seriously delayed through workers leaving their jobs and returning to the mainland almost as soon as they had arrived. The Minister was asked whether he would direct them to return to the islands, but characteristically he decided first to investigate the causes of their dissatisfaction and sent two of his Labour Supply Advisers to examine conditions on the spot. Among the reasons which they found for men going home was the monotony of the life with nothing to do when the day's work was done, overcrowding in huts which were also untidy and dirty, and the poor quality of the medical and sanitary arrangements. What was required was the appointment of welfare officers who would make it their particular interest to see that living conditions were improved and amusements and recreation provided for out-of-work hours. In addition the advisers recommended that, in view of the weather conditions in the winter months of the year, the workers should be guaranteed a 44-hour week and given a six months' contract with ten days' holiday on full pay and a free return ticket at the end of the first three months. The Minister accepted this advice and immediate steps were taken in conjunction with the building industry to put it into effect. As a result turnover declined from ninety per cent. to ten per cent. and for some months to come it was possible to find and keep the necessary labour on the sites without the use of directions.¹

In September a period of intensive air-raids necessitated special measures to ensure that repairs to factories essential to the war effort were put in hand with as little delay as possible, and men of various occupations rendered unemployed by the raids were enrolled for the clearing of débris. The shortage of building labour for all classes of work was, however, becoming acute, and to limit the volume of work put in hand a licensing system was imposed on non-essential projects. In October a further important development took place. The Ministry of Works, which Mr. Bevin, it will be remembered, had recommended in his first memorandum should be set up, started out on its career. Responsibility for all building problems now passed to the new department and the Ministry of Labour, aided by the Undertakings (Restriction on Engagement) Order,² continued its task of supplying the requisite labour.

¹ Formal direction of labour to the Orkneys was not resorted to until April 1942.

² See above p. 122.

OTHER IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES

Engineering and building were not the only industries to whose manpower requirements the Ministry of Labour gave their attention. Special steps were also taken to conserve and maintain the labour forces of other important industries. During the early months of 1940 coal-miners had been drifting away from the pits to more highly paid employment in the munitions industries, and by the end of May the situation was so serious that the Mines Department estimated that 40,000 more workers would be needed in the next three months to obtain the additional coal required under the approved programme. Accordingly, a clause was inserted in the Restriction on Engagement Order forbidding the engagement in other industries of miners, or men who had been recently employed in that industry, otherwise than through the employment exchanges. At the same time the Government appealed to ex-miners to register at the exchanges and indicate their willingness to return to the mines, and unemployed workers in other industries who might be suitable for work in the coal-mines were provisionally earmarked.

Within a month of the issue of the Order, however, the Continental market for coal had gone, and the Secretary for Mines wrote to the Minister of Labour stating that it would now be sufficient if the labour force were maintained at its April level. At the same time consternation within the mining areas at the effects of the loss of their markets led to every kind of political pressure for the transfer of surplus workers to other types of employment. The Government was thus faced with an intractable problem. On the one hand it was undesirable in time of war to keep considerable numbers of miners in enforced unemployment; on the other hand there was the danger that, if they were allowed to leave the industry, there would be insufficient skilled manpower available when, as might reasonably be anticipated, the expanding production programme would require additional quantities of coal. In the event it was decided, while leaving the Order in force, to permit unemployed persons in the coal mining industry to be placed without restriction in other jobs and to call off the hunt for ex-miners in other industries. By the end of the year large numbers of unemployed coal-miners had been found employment on constructional work connected with the war effort or in the production of munitions, while others had been called up for the Forces. The mining industry thus lost many of its experienced workers and from 1941 onwards the problem of how to build up its depleted labour force was to tax all the ingenuity of the Minister of Labour.

Like coal mining, the agricultural industry had also in the early months of the war suffered from an exodus of its workers to better-paid employment, and provisions about the engagement of

unemployed farm workers were, therefore, made in the Restriction on Engagement Order similar to those that applied to miners. About the same time the minimum wage of male farm labourers, which in some counties had been as low as 32s., was fixed by the Agricultural Wages Board at 48s., a week.¹ These two measures undoubtedly led to some temporary improvement, but it was not simply a national problem. In some areas there were actual surpluses of labour; the difficulty was to find workers willing to transfer to other places, and to find accommodation for those who were prepared to move. In another respect provision of labour for the land was easier than for the mines because, as subsequent months were to show, there were many jobs that could be satisfactorily done by women.

The special treatment accorded to mining and agriculture led to requests from a number of other industries which were losing their workers to be brought within the provisions of the Restriction on Engagement Order. These included transport and a variety of industries outside the main munitions group, such as brick manufacture, iron-ore mining and baking, to which the war had not brought high earnings or in which the work was arduous or unpleasant. To meet these representations by an extension of the Order was impracticable, and instead an administrative remedy of general application was adopted. Employment exchanges were instructed that workers attached to some particular essential industry should not be submitted for employment in engineering, civil engineering and building, unless it was clear that work in their own industry was not likely to be available for them at a very early date. In selecting the industries that would come under this scheme the Minister laid down two criteria; rates of pay must be fixed by industrial negotiation, and there must be satisfactory welfare conditions. Where one or either of these conditions was not fulfilled as, for example, in the scrap metal industry he refused his consent.

In the summer of 1940 one of the grave threats to the economic life of the country was the possibility that shipping would have to be diverted from the East and South coasts to Western ports. In case this should happen the Minister of Labour after consultation with both sides of the industry made on 18th June an Order, under which employers and workers in the dock industry were obliged to register in accordance with schemes made for the different ports.² Arrangements were also made for the transfer of dockers to meet a diversion of shipping. The country was to be divided into four regions. In each region the dockers would be regarded as available for any port lying within its geographical compass and, in cases of necessity, they might

¹ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, January 1941, p. 12.

² Dock Labour (Compulsory Registration) Order, 1940, (S.R. & O. 1940, No. 1013).

be transferred from one region to another. At each of the principal ports labour inspectors were appointed to work under the control of a regional inspector and were given the responsibility of organising the supply of labour including the movement, where necessary, of dockers from one port to another.

Similar provisions were made for the shipbuilding and ship-repairing industry. In July a scheme was drawn up in co-operation with the employers' and workers' organisations for the voluntary transfer of workers, when the yards in which they were employed had been put out of action by enemy attack or where it was necessary to accelerate the completion of urgent work. The scheme was operated by a central committee on which the Admiralty, the Ministry of Labour and the two sides of the industry were represented and by local committees similarly constituted under the chairmanship of an officer of the Ministry of Labour, which were responsible for making all arrangements for the transfer of selected volunteers. At about the same time National Service officers selected from persons with the requisite technical experience were appointed to regulate the supply of labour within the industry.

LESS IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES

In the heterogeneous group of industries manufacturing for civilian consumption the labour outlook was wholly different. Starting in April 1940 the Board of Trade had made a series of Limitation of Supplies Orders. The first Orders only covered textiles, but in May they were extended to a much larger list of goods. The purpose of the Orders was to maintain the level of exports, to restrict unnecessary spending, and to release redundant labour which, it was assumed, could be re-absorbed in employment directly concerned with the war effort. The principle was sound enough, but its execution created for the Ministry of Labour great practical difficulties. The kernel of the problem was this. Whereas the Board of Trade could handle the allocation of materials industry by industry throughout the country as a whole, employment questions demanded separate consideration according to the area in which they arose. In many of the industries that would be affected by the cuts the firms were geographically widespread. While some of them were situated in areas containing engineering and other industries engaged in the production of war materials, others were in places where there were few, if any, alternative forms of employment within daily travelling distance of the workers' homes. There was thus a real danger that, if uncontrolled, the application of the Limitation of Supplied Orders would create pockets of unemployment. To avert this danger discussions were started by the Ministry of Labour with the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Supply, and by the

appointment of liaison officers close co-operation was established between the three departments.

The following policy was gradually evolved.¹ The Ministry of Labour provided the Board of Trade with a list of the areas where labour was most required for war production. On its side, the Board of Trade undertook to urge industries to concentrate their production in localities where there was the least demand for munitions workers. To this end it would readily give permission to firms in difficult labour areas to transfer their allocated quota of materials to firms not in close proximity to munitions factories. Further, in order that the Ministry of Labour might have advance information of anticipated changes in employment, the Board asked the different industries to furnish monthly returns of their prospects. Summaries by areas were then passed to the Ministry, which used them as a basis for further consultation with the unions affected on the geographical incidence of employment and unemployment among their members. The second method of combating unemployment was the controlled spread of Government contracts. Lists were drawn up jointly by the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Labour of the areas in which Government orders should be placed, continued or reduced, to serve as a guide to the Ministry of Supply, which in consequence of a decision of the production Council was no longer obliged to adhere to the tendering system in its choice of contractors. As a result of this arrangement some employers, especially in the hosiery industry, received orders which enabled them to retain employees whom they would otherwise have had to discharge, but it was not unnatural that the Ministry of Supply should hesitate before transferring its custom from firms of proved efficiency to firms of whose capacity to produce the required article it had no experience. For the pottery industry in which there was serious under-employment special temporary measures were taken. The limitation of supplies quota was raised from 66½ per cent. to 85 per cent. until the end of November, by which time it was expected that Government factories in the area would be ready to take on considerable numbers of new workers, and thus absorb redundant labour from the Potteries.

As the end of the year approached it became apparent that, although through the concerted efforts of the three departments fears of extensive, if temporary, unemployment had diminished, the system of quota restriction was not proving an effective instrument for increasing the number of workers on employment directly connected with the war. Too much depended upon the voluntary co-operation of employers and workers. In many firms the necessary re-adjustments, including transfer of labour, were not taking place. Plants were

¹ See E. L. Hargreaves and M. M. Gowing: *Civil Industry and Trade* Chapter V, especially pp. 102, 103 and 113-115. (This was known as the 'keep step' arrangement.)

working below capacity, and workers with their consent were being retained on a short-time schedule. This waste of labour and equipment, it was felt, called for a new policy which would encourage the re-equipping of redundant factories and the selective transfer of home trade quotas of materials to industrial units situated in areas where surplus labour was available. Out of these reflections was to emerge a plan for the concentration of industry.

UNEMPLOYMENT

In the summer of 1940 it was decided to review the registers of men who had been unemployed for a month or more, with a view to discovering how many were fit for immediate employment and of these how many were willing to take work in areas away from their homes. The enquiry was to be carried out by personal interviews with the unemployed and a panel from which the interviewers should be drawn was set up in each locality through the Local Employment Committees. By the end of October the work was virtually complete. In the course of four months about 151,700 men had been interviewed. Of these 116,900 or 77 per cent. were regarded as suitable for immediate employment, 3,000 or 2 per cent. as needing rehabilitation before being employed, and the remaining 31,800 or 21 per cent. as unsuitable for ordinary employment. Over 64,000 (42 per cent.) were found willing to take up employment in other areas, about 50,000 were unwilling but with good reasons, and nearly 6,000 unwilling but without good reasons. The number in the second group, about one-third of the total interviewed, was disconcertingly large, and it was decided to ask selected local offices the types of reasons for unwillingness to move which the panels had accepted as satisfactory. The replies which were in close agreement made it clear that age, chronic ailments and domestic circumstances, such as ill-health in the family or a reluctance to leave a nervous wife during air-raids, were the predominant reasons for accepting a man's unwillingness to go away from his home; and, even allowing for the fact that in most cases the panels were unable to check the statements made to them, there were no good grounds, it was felt, for questioning the conclusions they had reached. Although exact statistics were not available, the general impression was that a very high percentage of the men interviewed were over fifty years of age. It was not, therefore, surprising to find a considerable number not available for normal employment. The Minister, however, decided to have a further enquiry made with a view to discovering how many in this class could undertake light employment and so release the more able-bodied for heavier work. This was started in the new year.

(iii)

Industrial Relations

In determining the ways in which the statutory powers of control over the manpower of the country should be exercised, an essential condition of success was the avoidance of industrial disputes and the provision of acceptable machinery for the adjustment of wage claims. There were among the Government advisers some who continued to favour a system of central arbitration, under which wages would be reviewed every few months and adjustments correlated to the movement in prices of an iron ration. Unless a central control of wages were established, they believed that inflationary tendencies could not be held in check. The protracted and abortive discussions which had gone on during the earlier months of the war did not, however, hold out much promise that even under the new Administration such a plan would commend itself to the trade unions. The Minister of Labour was well aware from his past experience of the need to approach the problem with caution and reserve, and was equally convinced of the importance of reaching an acceptable conclusion without avoidable delay. At his first meeting with the National Advisory Council he had indicated that he was carefully considering the matter and had given an undertaking that in any proposals he might have to make for modifying the methods of adjusting wage claims he would as far as possible keep the existing joint machinery intact. It was not to be expected that on a matter of such importance the trade union representatives would be prepared straight away to show their hand. Too many detailed points of principle were involved.

Accordingly, the Minister invited the Joint Consultative Committee at its first meeting on 28th May to consider the best means of removing general problems of wages from the field of controversy during the critical months ahead. In particular he tentatively suggested the possibility of setting up a responsible tribunal to make periodical reviews of the situation and to determine a basis on which the wages of all industries could be uniformly adjusted. This proposal was not fully acceptable to either side of the Committee, and the Minister was content to adopt modified recommendations contained in a unanimous report of 4th June. In it the Committee affirmed two important principles. First, there should be no interference with the existing joint negotiating machinery in the different industries for dealing with matters affecting wages or conditions of employment. Secondly, where by this procedure a settlement could not be reached, the dispute should be referred to arbitration for a decision that would be binding on all

parties—and no lock-out or strike should take place. These recommendations, the significance of which will be more fully examined in a later chapter,¹ were embodied in the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, which was made on 18th July 1940.²

¹ See Chapter XXIV.

² S.R. & O. 1940, No. 1305..

CHAPTER VIII

THE APPLICATION OF CONTROLS TO CIVILIAN MANPOWER - 1941

THE ADEQUACY of the current methods for supplying and distributing labour was forcefully challenged in December 1940 when the Manpower Requirements Committee submitted its final report to the Production Council.¹ To recapitulate its conclusions—in the fifteen months ending December 1941 the Armed Forces required a net addition of one and three-quarter million men and 84,000 women, and to provide the necessary equipment for this expansion the labour force of the munitions industries would have to be increased by 580,000 men and 890,000 women. To obtain the men for the Services all industries would have to make their contribution and, in the case of the munitions industries, not only would replacements have to be found for the 468,000 to be called up from them but an additional half a million men would have to be transferred from less important work. Such a gigantic redistribution of manpower was impracticable unless, wherever possible, women were used as substitutes for men, and this would mean, it was calculated, bringing into employment something of the order of two millions from among those not gainfully employed or in unessential occupations. The execution of this programme was bound to have a disorganising effect upon industry and, if chaos was to be avoided, a stronger and tighter control over the movement of labour would have to be exercised.

About the same time as the Manpower Requirements Committee's report was produced an examination was made within the Ministry of Labour of the general labour supply position. This confirmed the stringency of manpower upon which the Committee had focused attention and brought to light a number of disquieting features in the manpower situation. An analysis of the unemployed registers had shown that amongst the wholly unemployed men not more than 150,000 were available for work and that this total was steadily decreasing. Great difficulties were being experienced in finding labour for a number of important industries, such as drop forging, and for the various building and construction schemes already in progress; and volunteers were not applying in sufficient numbers to fill the vacant places at the Government Training Centres. In the non-essential industries where production for the home market had been reduced by

¹ See above pp. 101-105.

cuts in the supply of materials the maximum number of redundant workers had not been discharged, and those declared surplus were frequently elderly and not of the type required for munitions work. Outside this group of industries there were other less essential trades and services, which could not be prevented from recruiting more labour or from retaining workers who were either not required or could be replaced by women. Lastly, even when surplus workers came into the market there was no guarantee that they would go where they were most required so long as persuasion was to remain the recognised means of guiding their choice. These considerations all suggested that voluntary methods, with appeals to the patriotism of employers and workers, would no longer suffice. The time for a sterner control over manpower had arrived. Proposals of the ways in which this might be done, however, were at first cautious and rather half-hearted. The Restriction on Engagement Order, it was suggested, might be extended to all industries on the model of its application to agriculture. A voluntary register of munition workers might be set up and, in the event of this proving unsatisfactory, provisional plans might be made for a compulsory register of older men and of women by successive age groups. Consideration should perhaps, too, be given to a wider use of directions. This last suggestion was no doubt put in this tentative way because of the known reluctance of the Minister to authorise the direction of workers to private employers, even if their wages and conditions of employment satisfied his standards.

A way out of this difficulty was, however, soon to be proposed. Let the Minister have discretion to declare any undertaking run by a private employer, where the conditions of employment were satisfactory, 'national work', and let there be attached to this designation conditions which would prevent workers from leaving or from being discharged from their employment without the permission of the Ministry of Labour. This ingenious device, which both respected and at the same time largely removed the grounds on which he had hesitated to use his powers of direction, was accepted by the Minister. In the middle of January, as we have seen, he presented to the War Cabinet a bold and comprehensive plan for a regulated control of manpower.¹ This included the new scheme of national work, provision for further registrations with a wider exercise of directions, and revision of the basis upon which workers had hitherto been reserved from call-up. We must now describe how each of these important decisions of policy was translated into practice.

¹ See above pp. 107-108.

(i)

The Essential Work Order

Before the proposed scheme of national work could be put into operation by Order, it was necessary to amend Defence Regulation 58A so as to provide the requisite authority.¹ At the end of February 1941 a new clause was accordingly added, and essential work (which was the phrase decided upon in preference to national work) was defined as work appearing to the Minister to be essential for the defence of the realm, the efficient prosecution of the war, or the life of the community. This was followed a few days later by the Essential Work (General Provisions) Order,² which later became known as the Principal Order, and the provisions which it laid down, although in part subsequently modified in the light of experience, governed the future operation of this far-reaching plan for the maintenance and employment of manpower in important industries and services.

Beginning with matters of machinery the Order prescribed that undertakings which the Minister deemed expedient to designate as on essential work should be entered in a register to be maintained by his Ministry, and that a confirming certificate, copies of which must be prominently displayed in the works, should be issued to the managements. Before deciding to schedule an undertaking, the Minister was required to satisfy himself that the terms and conditions of employment were not below recognised standards, that the arrangements for the welfare of the workers were suitable, and that where training was desirable adequate facilities were available. As, however, these enquiries would take time, undertakings might in the meantime be provisionally scheduled and such provisional certificates, which could be rescinded at any time, should be valid for a period not exceeding three months. Turning to employment in a scheduled undertaking, the Order laid down conditions which were in conformity with those that had been in principle agreed when the scheme of 'national work' had first been discussed. An employer was forbidden to discharge a worker except on grounds of serious misconduct until he obtained the permission of the National Service officer of the Ministry and, if he wished to dispense with an employee's service, he must give him not less than a week's notice. Similarly a worker might not leave his employment without first obtaining the permission of the National Service officer and, if he wished to terminate his contract, he must give his employer a week's notice. All applications to the National Service

¹ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 257, 28th February 1941.

² S.R. & O. 1941, No. 302, 5th March 1941.

officer must be made in writing, and the latter as far as practicable should give his verdict within seven days. If an employer or a worker was aggrieved at the decision taken by the National Service officer, he could within a fortnight request the officer to refer the matter to a Local Appeal Board, consisting of a representative of employers and a representative of workers drawn from panels of persons chosen for this purpose and a chairman appointed by the Minister. The Board was then given a week in which to decide on its recommendations to the National Service officer, who was empowered to revise his decision in the light of its findings. The Order further laid down important conditions governing wages and absenteeism. An employer in a scheduled undertaking was required to pay every employee covered by the order a guaranteed wage, which for piece-workers was to be calculated on a daily and for time-workers on a weekly basis; provided that the worker was capable of and available for work and, when work in his normal occupation was not available, he was ready to perform other reasonable services outside his usual duties. If a worker absented himself without leave or justifiable excuse or was persistently late at his work, his employer might report the case with particulars to the National Service officer, and the latter, if he came to the opinion that the complaint was substantiated, could issue directions to the worker about the time at which he must attend and the hours during which he must remain at work. Here again provision was made for an appeal by the worker to the Local Appeal Board against the decision of the officer, who was authorised to revise his directions in the light of the Board's recommendation. With a view to ensuring that the provisions of the Order were being properly observed, an employer was also obliged to keep such records as the Minister might by notice require of him, and to produce them for the inspection of an officer authorised for this purpose to enter his premises. Lastly, provision was made for adapting the terms of the Order so that they would apply to Government establishments and enable such undertakings as Royal Ordnance Factories to be scheduled.

Before the Essential Work Order was actually made, broad agreement had been reached on the machinery for scheduling. This was to be carried out in two stages. First, the Order would be applied to a particular industry, and when this had been done, undertakings within that industry would be considered for scheduling. The initiative in proposing that an industry should be brought under the Order would normally be taken by the department most interested in its production, and the decision would rest with the Ministry of Labour after consultation with the appropriate representatives of the two sides of the industry. At the second stage action would be decentralised. It would be for the regional representatives of the interested Government departments to submit to the divisional controllers of the Ministry of

Labour a list of undertakings recommended for scheduling. The controller would then make the necessary enquiries about the terms and conditions of employment in each of the firms and, if satisfied that they were reasonably adequate, would provisionally enter its name on the register. This practice was generally adhered to in the ensuing months and, although a great deal of detailed work was involved, by December 1941 the Principal Order had been applied to 55 industries and 26,780 undertakings had been scheduled, covering over four and a half million workers in the proportion of three and a half million men and one million women.¹

The Order was first applied to the engineering industry including aircraft manufacture, and by the end of the year approximately 8,000 of its undertakings had been scheduled. Of the other industries motor vehicle repairing, iron and steel, road haulage and gas supply provided the next highest number of scheduled undertakings; firms in these industries when added to the engineering firms represented about 70 per cent. of the whole register. As the provisions of the principal Essential Work Order were not in all respects applicable to their special employment conditions, separate Orders were made for the shipbuilding and ship-repairing,² coal-mining, building and civil engineering industries, and for railway undertakings, the Merchant Navy and the docks.

Under the Merchant Navy Order³ a Reserve called the Merchant Navy Reserve Pool was established. This was created with the express object of ensuring that, if officers and men of the Merchant Navy were not to be allowed to take other employment ashore, they would be granted adequate leave at the end of a voyage and receive some wage during the period they were ashore between voyages. Accordingly, all officers and men who had, at the date of the Order, recently terminated their voyages, and all who subsequently ended their voyages, were entered into this Reserve and received what came to be known as pool pay while waiting for appointment to another ship.

The Reserve was under the control of the employers' organisation—the Shipping Federation, assisted by the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool—but the approval of the representative of the officer's or man's society had to be obtained before instructions were issued to him as to the employment he should undertake, and, in particular, before his employment in the Merchant Navy was terminated. The conditions of employment in the Reserve were, like the conditions of employment at sea, negotiated by the employers' and employees' representatives on the National Maritime Board. Whereas the administrative expenses were met by the Shipping Federation, the

¹ For statistics covering the period of the war see Statistical Appendix Table XI.

² See P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter IV (iv).

³ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 634, 1st May 1941.

cost of the wages to the officers and men whilst in the Reserve was borne by the Government. These arrangements worked most satisfactorily. They enabled officers and men to get their appropriate leave and to receive pay between voyages, and they also secured that there was always a reserve ready to fill vacancies.

Out of the Dock Labour Order¹ made in September 1941 far-reaching and important results emerged. It will be remembered that in June 1940 the Dock Labour (Compulsory Registration) Order had been made and that schemes were subsequently drawn up which obliged dockers at the different ports to register their names and to hold themselves available for transfer to meet a diversion of shipping. These arrangements served a useful purpose, but they did not touch the chronic trouble in the docks—casual labour. Owing to the fluctuation in the volume of shipping entering and leaving port there was at times insufficient work for the number of available dockers, with the result that men were sometimes for quite considerable periods unemployed and unpaid. In the pre-war years Ernest Bevin as the dockers' leader had vigorously campaigned for more stable terms of employment, and on becoming Minister of Labour he had at last the power to put his plans for the de-casualisation of dock labour into operation. He began with the ports on the Clyde and Mersey and by March 1941 schemes, which were administered by the Ministry of War Transport, had started to function. In the autumn, under the terms of the newly made Essential Work Order for the docks, schemes were put into operation in the other principal ports, but under a different system of administration. Responsibility was entrusted not to the Ministry of War Transport but to a newly constituted and independent body—the National Dock Labour Corporation, which operated through local boards. No change was made in the normal practice by which employers twice a day selected from the dockers who assembled at the call-stands as many as they needed for the jobs they had in hand. Under the new scheme, however, each dock worker was required to attend eleven calls a week. If he was not engaged by an employer he entered a reserve pool and received a payment for attendance. In return he had to be prepared to accept any work of which he was capable and, if required, to transfer to another port. The scheme was financed by payments to the Corporation by employers of a fixed percentage on the wages of their workers whether regular employees of the firm or allocated to them by the Corporation manager. The de-casualisation scheme—which was the forerunner of the scheme in operation to-day—had two great merits. First, it gave to every registered docker who was regular in his call attendances but was not engaged by an employer a guaranteed weekly wage and, secondly, by removing the fear of unemployment it conserved the labour force of

¹ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 1440, 15th September 1941.

the industry and made its members available for employment wherever the vicissitudes of war might create the demand.

By the end of 1941 over 3,500 undertakings (or in the case of the building industry, sites) had been scheduled under the Special Orders, covering approximately, 1,100,000 workers of whom the great majority were, of course, men. Thus under the combined operations of the principal and particular Essential Work Orders some 30,000 undertakings affecting about $5\frac{3}{4}$ million workers had been scheduled in the course of nine months.

The general supervision of the operation of the Essential Work Order was entrusted to an inter-departmental committee of officials under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, which was called the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. This had been set up in March 1941 to replace the Labour Supply Board with its four industrial representatives, which had proved less useful than its author had anticipated. From now onwards the Minister was content to rely on the advice of the senior officials of his department with whom he had established relations of mutual regard. In the course of the summer of 1941 the Committee agreed to a number of modifications in the working of the Order which experience had shown were desirable. In May permission was given to schedule a small number of undertakings whose production was vital but in recurrent rather than constant demand, provided the industry to which they belonged had been brought within the Order. In July this latter condition was waived where it could be shown that an undertaking, whose conditions of employment were satisfactory, did not fall within an easily definable industry, or belonged to a section of an industry the whole of which it was undesirable to bring under the Order, or was in a new and unorganised industry, such as plastics, in which there had not yet been time to set up a wage-fixing machinery. At about the same time an amending Order¹ introduced a greater degree of procedural flexibility. Whereas under the original Order when an undertaking was scheduled all its employees were without exception covered, it would in future be permissible to designate the classes or description of workers to whom the provisions of the Order would apply. Secondly, the period for which a provisional certificate of scheduling was valid was extended from three to six months, because experience had shown that the necessary enquiries could not be satisfactorily completed within the shorter time limit. Lastly, the position of the worker who had been suspended by his employer for misconduct was clarified. Under the original Order this disciplinary corrective had failed in its purpose because the employer was obliged to continue to pay the worker his guaranteed wage. In future an employer would be able to suspend an employee for three days without pay. The latter would, however, have

¹ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 1051, 18th July 1941.

the right to submit his case to the Local Appeal Board and, if his appeal was upheld, he would be entitled to recover the wages which he had lost during the period of his suspension.

This adjustment of the conditions governing disciplinary suspension resolved one of the problems created by the guaranteed wage provision of the Order. But there were others which were more complex and of deeper significance. If work was not available because the factory had been bombed, would the employer be obliged to continue to pay a guaranteed wage? It was felt that, while it would be inequitable that he should be exposed to a very heavy liability which might continue indefinitely, there was no particular hardship in obliging him to pay the guaranteed wage for a week. The employer could then put his case to the National Service officer who, if satisfied that owing to enemy action the services of an employee would not be wanted after the expiration of the requisite week's notice, would normally give permission for his discharge. The employer should, however, the Minister added, make the fullest use of his labour in repairing the damage to his factory and, to avoid an unnecessary dispersal of workers, arrange for their loan to other factories to which contracts might have to be temporarily switched.

A second conundrum of a different kind arose over the position of workers who were not willing to take a recognised holiday because, for example, owing to their recent engagement they did not qualify for holiday 'credits' and could not afford to go away. Should they be entitled to the guaranteed wage if they presented themselves for work? An explanatory leaflet issued to employers at the time when their establishments were scheduled had stated that it was not intended that the guarantee of a minimum wage should affect holiday schemes already in force. An employee taking his holiday would be entitled to such payments as were due to him under existing arrangements, but would not be able to claim the guaranteed wage as if he were available for work while on holiday. This interpretation was clear enough, but there were two reasons why the question had to be re-examined. One was the extreme case of workers, backed by their unions, who deliberately made themselves available for work during a pre-arranged or recognised holiday period and subsequently claimed wages for the time involved. The other was the more deserving case of newly engaged workers who were genuinely unable to afford the holiday forced upon them by the closing of the works. This category included women compulsorily transferred from their homes. Strictly, individual claims put forward by workers could only be settled by the jurisdiction of the Courts but, in order to narrow the scope for different interpretations of the Order, it was decided to insert a new clause in it. This stated that 'when any holiday occurs on any day or during any week, the normal working hours of that day or that week shall be treated as reduced by

the extent of the holiday and the normal working hours attributable to that holiday'¹ This meant in plain English that a worker covered by a holiday agreement could no longer be held to be available for work during the holiday nor, if he presented himself, could he claim the guaranteed wage.

One more type of problem may be briefly noted—the position of the employer if in consequence of an illegal strike among a section of his employees there was no work available for the others who were willing to continue at their jobs. To a suggestion of the Ministry of Labour that the employer should in such circumstances be relieved of his obligations to pay the guaranteed wage the Trades Union Congress took strong exception. They were not prepared to agree that workers who were tied by an Order to an establishment should be deprived of wages guaranteed under the same Order owing to circumstances over which they had no control; and they were not convinced that any change was necessary in the current provisions which obliged an employer to continue to pay the guaranteed wage. The Minister, however, was not satisfied and in the end made a fourfold proposal. Under this (i) an employer would be empowered to give four days' notice of his intention to stop paying the guaranteed wage; (ii) while the guaranteed wage was suspended a worker might leave his employment without the National Service officer's permission; (iii) when the employer could again provide work he should notify the worker, and from that date the normal right to the guaranteed wage would operate; and (iv) if the worker failed to present himself on the notified day, his employment would be deemed to be terminated, and he would not be entitled to the guaranteed wage unless and until the employer re-engaged him. These proposals were embodied in an amendment to the Order made in March 1942,² the Trades Union Congress being given an assurance that, if an employee terminated his employment, the Ministry would not prevent him obtaining other work or refuse to assist him to find it.

(ii)

Registrations

A fortnight after the Essential Work Order had been made a second compulsory measure received Parliamentary sanction; this was the Registration for Employment Order.³ At his meeting with the National Advisory Council at the end of January 1941, at which he had

¹ S.R. & O. 1942, No. 371, 2nd March 1942, Section 4 (1) (g).

² S.R. & O. 1942, No. 371, 2nd March 1942, Section 4(1) (h).

³ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 368, 15th March, 1941.

explained his plans for the future, the Minister had indicated that he was proposing to introduce industrial registration and that this might take two forms—a special registration of workers in particular industries, and a more comprehensive registration of men and women by age groups. The former procedure had already been applied to the engineering industry and in March, as the Minister had foreshadowed, a registration was made of workers in skilled occupations in the ship-building and ship-repairing industry.¹ Later in the year the practice was extended to marine engineering, merchant seamen and coal-mining.² In his speech to the Council the Minister had given the impression that a general registration by age groups might not be necessary for some time to come, but further reflection or advice appears to have convinced him that, as the registering of successive age groups would necessarily be a long drawn out process, it would be as well not to delay any further. On 14th March the Order was made and the first registrations of men and women took place in the following month.

The main purpose of the Order was to enable a survey to be made of the available manpower in the country, so as to select those who would be likely to be useful to the war effort. Persons registering were, therefore, required to furnish particulars of their present employment, and women were also asked to give information about their household responsibilities and, if married or widowed, to state whether they had living with them children of their own under fourteen years of age. As the men required to register were above the call-up age and would to a large extent be already on essential work, it was decided—so as to avoid unnecessary work for the employment exchanges and irritation to the workers—to exclude for the time being those who were employed in a considerable number of specified industries such as agriculture, coal-mining, building, textiles and the wide group of munitions industries. In the case of women no exclusion of industries was initially made, but those already in the Services or in the nursing profession were not required to register. In instructions issued to its local offices the Ministry of Labour laid down the order in which the registrants should be interviewed. The unemployed should be summoned first, then men and women who were only in part-time employment, and finally those in full-time employment who were not in reserved occupations or substantially engaged on Government work. The question whether persons in these excluded classes should be later interviewed was for the present left undetermined. From the registration of men it was not anticipated that much useful material would be forthcoming, but there would at least be the chance of picking up a residue who were

¹ Under the Industrial Registration (No. 1) Order, 24th February 1941 (S.R. & O. 1941, No. 239).

² These registrations were made under the Registration for Employment Order.

not yet employed on important work. On the other hand, the successive registration of younger women might be expected to produce substantial numbers who were either not employed or who could be moved, by direction if necessary, from what they were doing to work more closely connected with the war effort. Indeed, without such registrations it was difficult to see how the large number of women who were required to take the place of men in industry were to be found.

The first registration covering men between the ages of forty-one and forty-three was held on 5th April, and by the end of the year men up to the age of forty-six (at the time of their registration) had been called upon to register.¹ Later in the month the registration of women began with those born in 1920, and the process continued until by December all women between the ages of twenty and thirty-one had been registered.

(iii)

Protected Work

The third proposal in the Minister's memorandum to the War Cabinet in January 1941 was, it will be remembered, the promised revision of the principle on which men had been hitherto reserved from call-up, so that in future not merely their age and occupation but the work on which they were employed would be the relevant considerations.² To give effect to this undertaking some radical alteration had to be made in the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, and the changes which were introduced were of two kinds. The first, which will be described more fully in the next chapter, was the raising in successive stages of the age of reservation in a large number of occupations. The second was the insertion against certain occupations of a double age of reservation in accordance with the scheme of Protected Work drawn up by Sir William Beveridge. As industry rather than the Services was the chief beneficiary under this plan this will be a convenient place to describe its main features.

The scheme of Protected Work was intended as a means of securing that the only young men reserved in their civilian occupations would be those whose skill was being used upon essential jobs. This could be best done, it was thought, by identifying establishments or branches of

¹ During 1942 men born in the years 1892 to 1894 were called upon to register and by September 1942, when the final registration was made, 1,933,000 men from 41 to 50 years of age had been registered. Most of the 1,267,800 men who were registered during 1941 were already engaged on work of national importance, and by March 1942 only about 20,000 had been found available for transfer or transferred to other work. Altogether during 1942 52,400 men were transferred to vital war industries (or to training for such industries) from the less essential work in which they were employed.

² See above p. 108.

establishments engaged on work of particular importance to the war effort and entering their names on a register. This register, which was known as the Register of Protected Establishments, was drawn up by the Ministry of Labour in consultation with the other Government departments concerned. Applications to be entered on it were invited from firms in basic industries, such as metal manufacture and ship-building, and in services, such as gas, water and electricity, docks and railways, essential to the life of the community, and from undertakings employed to at least 80 per cent. upon contracts for the Government or upon production for export. By December 1941 when the Register was closed approximately 100,000 firms had been admitted. Among the advantages which firms derived from being classified as protected establishments was the opportunity which it gave them to obtain and retain the workers they required. The method devised was as follows. In a number of occupations in the Schedule a double age of reservation was inserted and a worker in a protected establishment was reserved at the lower of the two. In some occupations there was a difference of ten years or more between the two ages of reservation. For example the double age of reservation for an electrician wireman was 25/35 and for a boreman and driller 18/35. The scheme had two avowed purposes—to encourage workers to move on to important war work, and to de-reserve and make available for call-up men whose skill was not being used on production or services of national importance. It was more successful in achieving the first than the second.¹

(iv)

Concentration of Industry

From this account of the methods by which the proposals in the Minister of Labour's memorandum of January 1941 were put into operation we may turn to examine the measures taken for reducing employment in less essential industries. Hitherto the Board of Trade's attempts to squeeze these industries had been viewed with some alarm by the Ministry of Labour, lest the effect should be merely an increase in unemployment. Early in January 1941, however, the Ministry of Labour wrote to the Board of Trade suggesting that, in order to maintain the labour force required for essential Government work and export and to meet the minimum consumer requirements in non-munitions industries with the most economical use of manpower, new methods would have to be introduced. These would have three main objects: the concentration of necessary work for the home market in areas where the munitions labour demands were least heavy; the prevention of short-time and under-employment as a means of circumventing

¹ See below p. 161.

the effect of limited supplies of materials; and, in consultation with the workers, the release of more mobile and adaptable types of labour. At a subsequent inter-departmental meeting it was resolved that concentration should proceed industry by industry, that agreement should be reached centrally on the firms to be earmarked as sources of labour and factory space, and that in selecting them particular attention should be paid to the need for reducing non-essential production in those areas where shortages of labour were likely to be most acute. It was further concluded that a joint appeal should be made to the Ministry of Supply so that the same principle should be applied to its raw material industries as to the manufacturing industries for which the Board of Trade was responsible. Subsequently, further thought was given to the best method of carrying out concentration. The earlier proposals that firms which would be required to give up labour and factory space should be selected by the Board of Trade in consultation with the Ministry of Labour was discarded. Instead it was decided to leave it to individual firms to make their own voluntary arrangements and then submit them for the approval of the Board of Trade.

The Concentration of Industry scheme was announced in March 1941. In an explanatory memorandum issued to the public the two-fold purpose of the scheme was emphasised.¹ It was designed to prevent a wasteful use of resources in civilian industries and to free labour and factory space for war purposes. It would also, it was hoped, safeguard the post-war structure of an industry by keeping a number of nucleus firms in full production and by providing that those that it was decided to close should be maintained in readiness to re-open when the war was over. The procedure would be as follows. The Board of Trade would inform each industry of the degree of concentration that was required of it, and would then expect individual firms to make their own mutual arrangements to produce this result. In drawing up their schemes two objectives should be kept constantly in mind: first, the establishments which it was proposed should continue in production should be in areas where there was the least demand for munitions labour and, secondly, those selected for closing down should contain workers who could be readily re-absorbed on war work. If these conditions were satisfied, then any firm that made arrangements to work full time, whether by taking over and closing down other units or otherwise, would be granted nucleus status. Apart from safeguarding its premises and supplies this would also confer substantial labour advantages. In appropriate cases the Ministry of Labour would on the recommendation of the Board of Trade assist in maintaining the necessary supply of labour, and a nucleus firm would be admitted to

¹ *Concentration of Production, Explanatory Memorandum*, Cmd. 6258: H. of C. Deb., Vol. 369, Col. 774-776.

the Register of Protected Establishments and thereby obtain for such of its workers as were in skilled occupations reservation at the lower of the two prescribed ages in the Schedule. Firms were further advised that before deciding among themselves which of them should be nucleus firms and which of them should be closed they should consult the local offices of the Ministry of Labour.

In order to make it easier to grasp quickly the labour situation in different parts of the country, the Ministry of Labour drew up an unpublished list in which their local office areas were classified on a colour scheme borrowed from the traffic lights system. 'Green' areas were those in which there was available labour beyond local needs that could be transferred to war production elsewhere. 'Amber' areas were those in which there was no marked surplus or deficiency of labour. Areas where there were urgent unsatisfied demands for labour were marked 'red', and areas where potential requirements were so great that no further production should be introduced if it could possibly be avoided, were painted 'scarlet'. When the necessary enquiries and consultations had taken place firms were invited to submit their schemes to the Board of Trade for approval. At this stage the Ministry of Labour was again consulted, in order that it might have an opportunity of judging whether sufficient labour was likely to be released in the right places. If the proposed scheme was found generally satisfactory, the firm was then invited to make formal application and, if the detailed arrangements were approved, a nucleus certificate of three months validity was issued.

Although the Board of Trade had quickly approached twenty industries, progress in concentration was disappointingly slow. After a month only thirty firms, twelve of them in the hosiery industry, had submitted schemes based on the closing down of undertakings, although some two hundred had applied for nucleus status on the grounds that they were already running full and need not take over any other firm's production. This reluctance to draw up schemes may have been due to a number of causes. There was a natural distaste among firms that would have to close to hand over their trade secrets to a competitor, and a fear too that, whatever assurances might be given about the future, they would not recover their identity when the war was over. Moreover, whereas in some industries there was a multiplicity of small firms, which in itself made concentration difficult, in others there were relatively few firms but they were geographically far apart, and concentration would involve the difficulty of transferring skilled workers. There was also the problem of finding suitable factories in 'green' areas. Most significant of all perhaps was the unexpected discovery that, in accordance with advice previously given shortly after the Limitation of Supplies Order was made, a large number of firms in relatively unessential industries, such as for example

those manufacturing photographic goods, toys, and fountain pens, had succeeded in adapting their machinery to the production of various kinds of war materials and the contracts which they had secured left them with very little spare capacity or labour.

Late in April the Board of Trade decided to force the pace by fixing closing dates round about the end of May for the submission of voluntary schemes. The progress of concentration was then reviewed and a new principle was applied. If it appeared that further concentration was possible or desirable, the Board nominated nucleus and non-nucleus firms. This was often called compulsory concentration, but the term was really a misnomer. There was no specific legislation authorising the application of concentration; the policy was essentially one of inducements, and the sanctions behind it were the existing controls over materials, labour and factory space. The only notable exception was the cotton industry where licences to use yarn or raw cotton were withdrawn from non-nucleus firms, so that firms were in fact closed down. In other industries the new system of nomination met with varying success. In those which were subject to a strong central control it was relatively effective; but in others where there had been little response to the invitation to voluntary concentration the sanctions were correspondingly weak. In some cases nominated nucleus firms were not much impressed by the advantages of the status conferred upon them, and in consequence were not greatly concerned to see that the non-nucleus firms did actually close down, and many of the latter, where their premises were not requisitioned, managed to keep running on non-directable labour and with such raw materials as they were in one way or another able to acquire.¹

By the end of 1941 it looked as if the concentration of the industries affected by the Limitation of Supplies Order had reached its practical limits. The process was not yet, however, quite complete and in the next year the lace and clothing industries, for example, were concentrated. There were also still possibilities to be explored among the raw materials industries, and partly as a result of pressure from the Minister of Labour, who was disappointed at the slow progress of concentration and the meagre amount of labour that it had produced, attempts, most of them ineffective, were made to concentrate industries such as wool, paper, iron and steel. In addition it was anticipated that useful workers might be obtained from some of the food industries if their production was rationalised.² It was only when all these suggestions had been examined and tested that the experiment of concentration came to an end. A review of its achievement will, therefore, be reserved for a later chapter.

¹ For a more detailed description of the policy and procedure of concentration of industries see E. L. Hargreaves and M.M. Gowing: *Civil Industry and Trade*, pp. 202-224.

² See Hammond: *Food* Volume I., Chapter XXV.

CHAPTER IX

THE CALL-UP IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE WAR

BY CONTRAST with the gradual introduction and exercise of compulsory powers to regulate the flow and distribution of civilian manpower, conscription, which had been applied on a limited scale during the last months of peace, was at the very outset of war accepted as the only satisfactory way of meeting the requirements of the Armed Forces. Volunteering alone was not a practicable alternative. To have permitted unrestricted enlistment would have been to repeat the costly errors of 1914, while controlled volunteering could give no guarantee that the necessary number of recruits would be forthcoming at the time at which they were wanted. Accordingly, authority to issue Royal Proclamations imposing a liability for service with the Armed Forces on men between the age of 18 and 41 was provided by the passing of the National Service (Armed Forces) Act on the same day on which war was declared.

In this chapter we shall first describe the procedure by which men were called up. We shall then examine their statutory rights under the National Service Act to apply for postponement of, or exemption from, service in the Armed Forces, and the chapter will conclude with an account of the administrative schemes by which at the discretion of the Minister of Labour men might on industrial grounds be either reserved in their occupation or have their call-up deferred, and of the stiffer conditions which had to be imposed as the rising demands of the Forces fell upon the shrinking manpower resources of the country.

(i)

Call-up Procedure

The first Proclamation, which was signed on 1st October 1939, placed an obligation to apply to be registered as and when required on men of 20 and 21 years of age, with the exception of those who had already registered under the Military Training Act of the previous June. Subsequent proclamations extended the liability to successive higher age groups until by June 1941 all men up to the age of 40 had been registered. In the following month the first registration of the 19-year-olds, who had been made liable by a Proclamation of 1st January

1940, took place and this was followed at the end of 1941 by a registration of men of 18½ who had been covered by a Proclamation of 29th January of that year.¹ In the course, therefore, of little over two years all men to whom the first National Service Act applied had been called upon to register. The average yield of each age class was 306,000 and the total number registered was a little over seven millions, which was reached in the following stages: 1939—727,000; 1940—4,100,000; 1941—2,222,000.²

The intervals at which registrations took place were timed so as to have in readiness a sufficient supply of men against the anticipated requirements of the three Services, which were notified to the Ministry of Labour. The rate of intake was necessarily dependent upon the ability of the three Services to provide equipment and training for the recruits and, in the months immediately following Dunkirk when virtually a new army had to be built up, the Army authorities were working under conditions which placed a severe strain on their administrative machine. The fact that during the summer men were attested in increasing numbers and at an accelerated pace was a great tribute to the patience and resourcefulness of the War Office and reflected the harmonious understanding that throughout the war marked the relations of all three Service departments with the Ministry of Labour.

Due notice was given through the press and the B.B.C. of the days on which particular age classes were required to register at any local office of the Ministry of Labour.³ When a man applied to be registered he was asked to give full particulars about himself including his age and address, his occupation and industry, and the name of his employer. If he stated that he had conscientious objections to military service, he was provisionally registered on a special register pending consideration of his case by a tribunal. The applicant was also invited to state his preference for any one of the three Services and he was told that, although no guarantee could be given, his choice would wherever possible be respected. A letter was next sent to his employer asking him to confirm or to modify the occupational information which the registrant had provided about himself. The question whether a man was available for call-up was then determined on the basis of the

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. XVI-XIX and Appendix I p. 335.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12. For detailed statistics see below Statistical Appendix, Table VI.

³ Various methods were adopted by the Ministry to identify and trace men who had apparently failed to register when required to do so. In the course of the war years over half a million cases were investigated and the results were reassuring. A large number of men when traced were found to have already registered or proceeded to rectify their omission, while over 200,000 had already joined the Forces or were found not to be liable under the National Service Acts. There remained about a thousand cases where men whose liability was clearly established persisted in their refusal to register. They were issued with a summons to attend a medical board and, if they failed to appear, legal proceedings were normally instituted.

Schedule of Reserved Occupations. If it appeared that he was in an occupation included in the Schedule and was either at or above the prescribed age of reservation, he was automatically reserved in his present employment. If he was below the age of reservation and was in an occupation for which there was a corresponding Service trade in the Forces, a note was made that he was not available for general service and should only be called up as a Service tradesman. After this preliminary sifting the completed cards of all registrants were sent to selected local offices of the Ministry of Labour, called Allocation Local Offices, where the next steps were taken to call up the available men in the particular age class.

The first duty of the Allocation Office was to issue instructions to attend a medical board to all registrants with the exception of those who were reserved under the Schedule, or for whom deferment of call-up had been granted or was known to be under consideration, or who had been provisionally registered as conscientious objectors. The order in which registrants were summoned was on the principle of youngest first, and single before married men; and normally six days' notice was given. The Medical Board consisted of a chairman and three or four members, all of whom were qualified medical practitioners and were appointed by the Minister of Labour from lists of civilian doctors supplied at first by the Ministry of Health. On completion of the examination men were graded according to their fitness for military service, under standards agreed with the Service departments, in four different grades; only those in the lowest grade were regarded as unfit for any form of service.¹ Each man was informed by the chairman of the grade in which he had been placed. There was no right of appeal against the decision of the Board but, if a man produced additional medical evidence, arrangements could be made for his re-examination. One or more medical boards were attached to every Allocation Local Office, in conjunction with each of which the Army had set up a recruiting centre. The Navy and the Air Force on the other hand, because of their relatively small requirements, had limited the number of their recruiting centres to the towns where the larger Allocation Local Offices were situated. Consequently, whereas men who were ready to join the Army or had expressed no preference were examined by the Medical Board nearest their homes, those who had opted for the Navy or Air Force were required to attend a Medical Board sitting in a town where the Service of their choice had a recruiting centre. If attendance at a Medical Board involved a journey of more than six miles travelling expenses were paid.

After their medical examination men were interviewed by the recruiting officer of the Service which they hoped, or were destined, to join. He recorded his remarks and his recommendation for posting.

¹ See further Statistical Appendix, Table VIII.

The cards for each man who had been medically examined and interviewed by the recruiting officer were then sent to the divisional offices of the Ministry of Labour and there formed a register of men available for posting, tradesmen being kept separate from non-tradesmen. Under arrangements made early in the war each of the three Service departments notified the Ministry of Labour of its requirements. The demand for each intake was then allocated by the Ministry in quotas to its eleven divisional offices and the chief recruiting officer of each Service, who was stationed in the same town as the divisional officer, allotted in conjunction with the appropriate officer of the Ministry of Labour the individuals to units. Enlistment notices were then issued instructing the recipients to report to a particular unit or depot on a prescribed day. It was inevitable that in the early stages mistakes were made in the selection of men for different branches of the Services. It was almost impossible for a recruiting officer in one short interview to sum up each man accurately and in particular to gauge his intelligence and capacity for absorbing training. Misfits were at first fairly numerous—particularly in the Army which had to deal not only with greater numbers but also, on the whole, with poorer material than either of the other two Services. It was not till 1942 that an effective remedy was found. Thereafter all army recruits were given an initial six weeks' basic military training at Training Centres, and during that time were put through a number of selected tests to discover for which particular branch of the Service they were most fitted.

The numbers of tradesmen of different types required by the Services were notified to the Ministry of Labour separately from their demands for general service men. Correspondingly, the Ministry of Labour maintained a separate register of skilled men classified by occupations, together with their appropriate Service trades, and allocated whatever men were available and suitable against the notified requirement. It was, of course, often impossible to meet the demands of the Services in full and when the shortage of skilled men became acute special steps were necessary.

These usually took the form of raising the age of reservation in occupations where the scarcity was most pronounced and where it was thought that this could be done without undue damage to civilian production. Other ways were also tried. At the beginning of 1941, for example, it was decided that volunteers could be accepted for certain Service trades irrespective of the ages at which they were reserved for their appropriate civil occupation—subject to the assent of their employers and in some cases also to the veto of the Sub-Committee of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. Further, young men of twenty in occupations where the age of reservation was twenty-one or higher were made available for call-up as Service tradesmen, and the deferments which retained them in their civilian employment were

cancelled. In some Service trades, on the other hand, particularly those connected with building and civil engineering, the supply of suitable men tended to exceed the anticipated demands of the Forces. It was consequently decided to place an asterisk against these occupations and men in them were made available for call-up for general service when other sources were insufficient to provide the requisite numbers. The need for these improvisations demonstrates the difficulties in which the Ministry of Labour was placed in holding a balance between the demands of the Services and industry.

At no period in the war was the supply of skilled men sufficient to meet the demands of both the Services and industry. Each competitor was ready to accuse the other of a wasteful use of skill; each was reluctant to believe that its own demands could not be met, provided the other were less exacting or extravagant. In the Services, no less than in industry, the truth that there was an absolute shortage of skilled men and that 'make do' expedients would have to be devised was not readily accepted. Plans to break down jobs and train less skilled men to perform them were in consequence a slow and tardy growth. In the early months of 1941 the belief was widespread that the Forces were not making a proper use of the skilled men they had received, and stories went round that fitters and turners, whom industry so badly needed, were employed exclusively on peeling potatoes with brief interludes of guard duties. In May a committee under Sir William (later Lord) Beveridge was asked to investigate, and in November it reported to the effect that, in the Army in particular, there was a widespread misuse of skilled men. These findings were accepted as substantially correct by the Government, which took the drastic step of stopping all intakes of tradesmen to the Army in the majority of the mechanical and electrical engineering trades. The ban was not lifted till August 1942. By that time the War Office had analysed 9,800 cases of alleged misuse of skill and had found only 1,300 that were in its judgement proved. But even if the Beveridge Committee may have overstated the extent to which skill was being misused—by not making sufficient allowance for exaggeration in the grievances of soldiers bored with waiting for an invader who never appeared—the Report had the salutary effect of compelling the Army to reconsider the jobs for which Service tradesmen were being allocated.

(ii)

Statutory Rights under the National Service Act

The only persons who were specifically excepted from the scope of the National Service Act were, apart from the mentally defective and the blind, men in the Regular Forces, men in the service of a Dominion or

Colonial Government, and men in Holy Orders together with ministers of any religious denomination. The Act, however, made statutory provision for considering claims for exemption for reasons of conscience, and for postponement of service on the ground of the serious personal hardship that immediate call-up would entail.¹

(a) CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTIONS

Special machinery was set up at the beginning of the war to deal with conscientious objections. Men who at the time of their registration were provisionally registered as objectors² were required to make application to one of a number of Local Tribunals set up by the Minister of Labour. Each tribunal consisted of a chairman—who in England and Wales was a county court judge, and in Scotland a sheriff or sheriff-substitute—and four members, at least one of whom was required by the Act to be appointed after consultation with organisations representative of workers. From these Local Tribunals there was a right of appeal to an Appellate Tribunal, one division of which was in 1939 established for England and Wales and one for Scotland. Four additional divisions for England and Wales were subsequently set up, and each consisted of a chairman of distinction and standing in the country and two members, one of whom represented workers.³ After hearing an applicant's submission there were four possible courses which tribunals were authorised to take. They might register him unconditionally; they might make his registration conditional on his undertaking to perform specified civil work and, if directed by the Ministry of Labour, to undergo suitable training for it; they might register him as liable to be called up for non-combatant service; or they might reject his application and order his name to be removed from the register of conscientious objectors. After the passing of the National Service Act of April 1941—under which conscientious objectors became liable to be called up for Civil Defence—the Minister of Labour was empowered to refer back to the tribunal any cases where a conditionally registered objector had, for reasons which seemed excusable, failed to comply with the instructions he had received. The Local Tribunal, or on appeal the Appellate Tribunal, could then, if satisfied, decide to register the man unconditionally or substitute some new specification for his conditional registration. A conscientious objector who failed to comply with the conditions on which he was registered and who was unable to satisfy the Court that his reasons were sufficient was liable on conviction to be fined or sent to prison.⁴

¹ See above p. 55.

² The numbers of such men are given in the Statistical Appendix, Table VI.

³ When, as will be described later in this chapter, women were made liable to be called up for the Auxiliary Services they were given the same opportunities as men to be registered as conscientious objectors, and two women were added to the membership of each Local and Appellate Tribunal.

⁴ Section 5 of the National Service (Armed Forces) Acts, 1939 and 1941.

The whole approach to the problem of conscientious objection in the Second World War was a notable advance on the way it had been handled when conscription was first introduced in 1916. Whereas in the First World War refusal to undertake combatant or military service of any kind had tended to be regarded as a subterfuge for escape from what was a national obligation or even as plain cowardice, public opinion in the interim years of peace had become better informed and in consequence more sympathetic and tolerant. Objections to taking up arms, it was recognised, might spring from a personal conviction of its wrongfulness, and should not be brushed aside or overruled just because the attitude of mind and the reasoning behind it seemed to those who thought otherwise immature or perverse. What did matter was the genuineness with which such beliefs were held, and sincerity must be the criterion on which claims for exemption from military service were adjudicated. This developed understanding of the nature of conscientious objection, which was implicit in speeches in Parliament when the Military Training Bill was being debated in the summer of 1939, found expression in the arrangements made for hearing and deciding applications to be exempted from military service. Externally the machinery was similar to that which had been devised in the First World War. There were to be local tribunals, and there were to be appellate tribunals. The difference lay in their composition and in the ways in which they exercised their powers. In the first war local tribunals—which might consist of any number of members from five to twenty-five—were for the most part composed of local magistrates or tradesmen chosen from lists provided by the political associations in the constituencies, and were attended by a uniformed representative from the War Office who was permitted to cross-examine each applicant. In the second war great care was taken to select members for the tribunals who might be expected to be patient listeners and impartial judges, while the secretary was a civil servant from the Ministry of Labour who only intervened in the discussions to correct factual misstatements. Moreover, the possible decisions that the tribunals were authorised to take were more clearly defined than they had been twenty-five years previously and, what was even more important, the tribunal took time and trouble to see that applicants were placed in what appeared to be the right category. Of course there were complaints of miscarriages of justice, but in retrospect the general impression left is that the tribunals performed a difficult, and what as the war went on must have become a wearisome, job with humanity and equity. The number of applications dealt with by the tribunals up to 30th June 1945 classified according to the decisions that were reached were as follows:¹

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p.25.

Registered unconditionally as a conscientious objector	3,577
Registered conditionally as a conscientious objector	28,720
Registered for non-combatant duties in the Forces	14,691
Name removed from register of conscientious objectors	12,204
Total	59,192

(b) **HARDSHIP**

At the time of his medical examination a man had the statutory right to apply for postponement of his call-up on grounds of severe personal hardship. Such applications, when they were not granted by the Minister, were referred to Military Service Hardship Committees whose membership was the same as that of the Courts of Referees under the Unemployment Insurance Act. When a committee was not unanimous in its decision, or gave permission to appeal, the applicant had a statutory right of appeal to the Umpire appointed under the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1935, who sat with two assessors appointed by the Minister of Labour. Pending his decision, which was final, no action was taken to call up the man.¹

The number of applications by men for postponement, which were dealt with by officers authorised to act on the Minister's behalf and by Hardship Committees set up to 30th June 1945, were as follows:²

	<i>First Applica- tions</i>	<i>Renewal Applica- tions</i>	<i>Total</i>
Granted by:			
Authorised Officers	55,961	14,913	70,874
Hardship Committees	157,963	117,669	275,632
Refused by:			
Hardship Committees	103,838	59,534	163,372
Total	317,762	192,116	509,878

Personal hardship was the only statutory ground on which applications for postponement of military service could be made and granted. By contrast, the question whether a man should be retained either permanently or for a period in civilian life in virtue of his occupation or the importance of the work upon which he was engaged was at the discretion of the Minister of Labour, and the provision made for dealing with such cases was administrative and not statutory.

¹ Section 6 of the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939.

² *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 23.

(iii)

Reservation and Deferment

At the beginning of the war the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was the only instrument by which men who had registered under the Act could on industrial grounds be held back from immediate call-up. Before the end of the year, however, it was found desirable to devise a method by which individual men not reserved under the Schedule could have their military service deferred because of the important contribution they were making to production of vital national importance. The first scheme was introduced in November 1939.¹ Under this the principal firms that were engaged on contracts and sub-contracts for the Government could apply to the Government department concerned with their production for the deferment of the call-up of individual workers who were employed in occupations included in the Schedule, but who were below the prescribed age of reservation. The production department then nominated the particular worker to the Ministry of Labour which, if satisfied, granted deferment. A little later a second scheme was put into operation which extended the grounds of eligibility for deferment.² Under it applications could be made to the interested Government department by firms, who were not authorised to use the earlier procedure, in respect of their individual workers whether or not they were employed in occupations covered by the Schedule. When the production department approved an application it recommended an appropriate period of deferment to the Ministry of Labour, with whom lay the final decision. In determining applications under both the schemes there were three governing factors: the importance of the work of the firm; the importance of the contribution that the individual man was making to it; and the possibility of replacing him by another worker not liable to be called up. For the first year all decisions were taken at the headquarters of the Ministry of Labour but at the beginning of 1941, because of the volume of the work, this duty was delegated to the divisional offices of the department. By the end of 1940 upwards of 200,000 men had been granted deferment of their call-up under these two schemes.³

In addition to these arrangements for deferring the call-up of individuals in productive industries schemes were started during 1940, and grew in number as the war went on, for dealing with men in certain other occupations which were of importance to the life of the community. These came to include the legal profession, accountancy,

¹ The N.S. 88 procedure.

² The N.S. 100 procedure.

³ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. 16-17.

banking and insurance, the press, the theatrical profession and officials of employers' organisations and trade unions. To enable applications on behalf of men in such occupations to be considered sympathetically and judiciously a special system was adopted. Advisory committees suitably constituted to represent expert opinion were set up for each profession and service. Applications for deferment were in the first place submitted to these committees and they made their recommendations, which were normally accepted, to the headquarters of the Ministry of Labour, with whom lay the ultimate determination. The decision reached in each case was then communicated to the Allocation Local Office that held the applicant's papers.

From this account of the machinery of call-up we may now turn to consider the ways in which the requirements of the Services were met and, as the war went on, the modifications that had to be introduced into the schemes of reservation and deferment to make the necessary numbers available.

There were two sources from which the Services obtained recruits: conscripts and volunteers. Many of the latter were young men of eighteen and nineteen who offered their services in advance of the time that they would be called upon to register, in order that they might have a better chance of getting into the Service they were eager to join. Every volunteer whatever his age had to apply to a Recruiting Centre, and an officer of the Ministry of Labour was stationed at each to determine his position in relation to the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. If he was in a reserved occupation, he was not accepted until the acquiescence of the interested Government department had been obtained. The Service department could, however, apply for a waiving of restrictions in respect of individual volunteers, and from the beginning of 1941 such applications were considered by a special inter-departmental committee under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour. About the same time it was agreed that the Schedule should be relaxed for any men volunteering to join the Air Force as pilots or observers, with the exception of those who were employed in a few 'scarcity' occupations. Up to the end of 1940 of the total number enrolled by the Air Force substantially more than half were volunteers, and in the Navy, whose requirements were relatively small, the proportion of voluntary enlistments was only a little lower than the intake from the call-up. It was different with the Army. Its projected strength far exceeded that of the other two Services together and, particularly after the fall of France, its demands for reinforcements were constant and intensive. Volunteering, which in the early months of the war had made an effective contribution, could do no more than supply a fraction of the numbers now required. It was from the call-up that the major supply must be found.¹ Registrations were accordingly accele-

¹ See Statistical Appendix, Table IV.

rated—in July 1940 they took place at weekly intervals—and by the end of the summer no fewer than sixteen age classes had been called up. So far the demands of the Army had been met fully and promptly—a great tribute to the effectiveness of the Ministry of Labour machine—but requirements were mounting and the supply that would come from registering the further age classes already proclaimed would soon begin to dry up.

(iv)

Changes in Policy and Procedure

In August 1940 the War Office presented its estimated manpower requirements for the build-up of the Army over the coming two years. A total of 300,000, which was subsequently increased by a further 57,000, was needed by March 1941 and thereafter an intake at the rate of 100,000 a month. Added to this were the comparatively small demands of the Navy and the Air Force for 6-7,000 and 25,000 a month respectively. This was an immense programme, and it was largely to test its feasibility that the Manpower Requirements Committee under the chairmanship of Sir William Beveridge was set up.

It will be remembered that the Committee in its final report in December 1940 reached the conclusion that the programme was not an impossibility, but it emphasised that it could only be carried out at the cost of a major disturbance in industry and the re-deployment on a scale hitherto not visualised of the manpower of the country. Every fit man who could be spared from civilian life would be needed in the Armed Forces, and every fit man reserved from call-up would in future have to be employed upon work that could not be adequately done by an older man or a woman. To put these proposals into operation important changes were made in the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. In the first place it was decided to raise the age of reservation in a considerable number of occupations in three stages (A, B and C) and the dates chosen for revision were 10th April, when the new Schedule was published, 1st July and 1st October. For most occupations the ages of reservation fixed for Stage A showed only slight upward variations from those already in operation. The major revisions were introduced at either Stage B or Stage C. Thus in some occupations the age of reservation, which was in April lower than twenty-five, was in either July or October raised to twenty-five, and in others where at the initial stage it stood at thirty it was raised at either Stage B or Stage C to thirty-five or the occupation ceased to be reserved at all. In comparatively few occupations were amendments

made at all three stages. The purpose was, of course, to make more younger men available for the Armed Forces, and the advance notice given of de-reservation was intended to give firms time to adjust their internal arrangements to offset the loss of particular skilled workers.

The second change introduced the new principle into the Schedule that has already been discussed; it will be remembered that in a number of occupations two ages of reservation often ten years or more apart were inserted with the object of reserving at the lower of the two ages men employed in a Protected Establishment. In addition to the protection given by the Schedule to workers at or above the age of reservation for their occupations and employment, applications could still be made by employers for the deferment of the call-up of individual men, whether or not employed in a Protected Establishment, who were below the age of reservation, on the grounds of the importance of the work being done by them.

With the opportunities given to workers who would otherwise have become liable to be called up to move to protected employment and thus qualify for further reservation, it is not surprising that the scheme of protected work, while bringing about a considerable transfer of labour from less essential to more essential work, produced a disappointingly low number of men for the Armed Forces. On paper the scheme was ingenious and encouraging; as a practical means of calling men up quickly it provided too many loopholes of legitimate escape. Nevertheless, it was an honest attempt to translate into practice the new principles upon which it had been decided that the reservation of workers should in future be determined. Nor were the lessons to be learnt from the scheme confined to policy; in procedure too it paved the way for a more effective machinery. The immense amount of detailed work involved in operating the scheme necessitated a large measure of decentralisation. The compilation of the Register of Protected Establishments was delegated to the divisional offices of the Ministry of Labour, and in each of them a National Service section was set up. Moreover, it was decided that in future applications for the deferment of the call-up of industrial workers should be made by employers direct to the local offices of the Ministry of Labour, which should refer any cases of doubt for determination by the divisional office after consultation, where necessary, with the interested Government department. This was a reversal of the earlier procedure by which employers sent their applications first to the interested production department. The new practice soon became the uniform method and there can be little doubt that it made for more equitable decisions. This policy of decentralisation foreshadowed the setting up of the District Manpower Boards, which from 1942 onwards became the recognised instrument for determining applications for deferment.¹

¹ See Chapter XVIII.

In March 1941 a new principle was introduced for regulating intake into the Army. As we have seen, the Prime Minister decided that in future the War Office should be given a ceiling within which it would be required to make its plans and dispositions. This was first fixed at 2,195,000 but was shortly afterwards raised to 2,216,800, and finally in the autumn of 1941 to 2,374,800. To the surprise of many, but not of the Ministry of Labour, it was found that the ceiling at the level that had been first agreed had been not only reached but actually exceeded by 10,050. The new programme could thus start without any arrears to be made up, and the future requirements for the three Services for the twelve months ending June 1942 were finally fixed as follows:

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Navy . . .	110,000	11,000
Army . . .	405,000	205,000
R.A.F. . .	200,000	140,000
	(Reduced from 247,000)	

In addition the Civil Defence Forces (for which men had been made liable to be called up under the National Service Act of April 1941)¹ needed 37,000 men of military age chiefly for the National Fire Service, and 106,000 women were wanted for the Land Army and the Civil Defence Services. The total estimated requirements thus came to 752,000 men and 462,000 women and, as the Air Force before agreeing to a reduction of 47,000 in their claim had already taken in some 26,000 men who could not without protest be transferred to the Army, the gross requirements for men were 778,000. To meet these demands it was calculated that under existing arrangements the available supply was 468,000. This left a deficiency of 310,000. How was this to be made up?

The recommendations that were made fell into two classes—those which could be carried out under existing sanctions and those which would require further legislation or a fresh War Cabinet decision. The following administrative changes were proposed by the Ministry of Labour in the autumn of 1941. The system of block reservation by occupations should be abandoned and be replaced by a system of individual deferment. Secondly, the age of reservation for practically all occupations should be raised one year at a time at monthly intervals, individual deferments being granted only to men engaged on work of vital national importance. Lastly, all existing deferments should be reviewed and the deferment of the call-up of men under twenty-five with the exception of those in a few scarcity occupations should be

¹ See Appendix at the end of this chapter.

cancelled, and in future few or no deferments should be granted to young men of these ages. By these means the Ministry expected to be able to withdraw the requisite 310,000 men from industry, and had worked out the quotas which it considered were reasonable for the three main groups of industries (munitions, other essential industries and less essential industries) to provide. The Lord President of the Council believed, however, that withdrawals on these scales would place an intolerable strain upon industry and, with a view to reducing the number of men that would have to be taken from the reserved and deferred classes, he made three additional proposals, of which the first raised a question of War Cabinet policy and the remaining two, if accepted, would necessitate legislation. Young men, he advised, should in future be called up at the age of $18\frac{1}{2}$ instead of at 19, and to quieten public anxiety an assurance should be given that everything would be done to respect the spirit of the Government's pledge that no soldier would be sent abroad until he had reached the age of 20. This new registration might be expected to yield by June 1942 some 60,000 recruits. Secondly, as the current demands for men in the Armed Forces were dependent upon the Women's Services being brought up to the required strength, and as volunteering, especially for the A.T.S., was unlikely to produce the necessary numbers, legislation should be introduced to make women liable to be called up by age groups for the Auxiliary Services, as far as practicable under the same conditions as applied to men. Lastly, an obligation should be placed upon all persons between the ages of 18 and 60 to perform some form of national service. This would have two advantages. It would enable the Ministry of Labour to find older men to undertake non-combatant duties in the Forces at present being performed by young women who, because of their greater adaptability, could be otherwise more profitably employed, and it would simplify the task of recruiting the large number of women required for the Services and for industry.

When these recommendations came to the War Cabinet the proposal to extend conscription to the Women's Services was, as we have seen, at first strenuously opposed but with the inclusion of extensive safeguards was finally accepted.¹ It was also agreed that a statutory obligation should be placed upon all persons between the ages of 18 and 60 to undertake some form of national service, but it was decided that the upper age of conscription of men for the Armed Forces should be 51. Lastly, the need to call up young men of $18\frac{1}{2}$ was accepted and the administrative changes proposed by the Ministry of Labour for handling reservations and deferment were endorsed. These decisions of the War Cabinet were embodied in the National Service (No. 2) Act which became law on 18th December 1941.²

¹ See above p.113; see also Chapter XVII.

² 5 and 6 Geo., c. 4.

APPENDIX I

Procedure for Supplying Personnel for Civil Defence and the Home Guard¹

In the early months of 1941 the Civil Defence Forces were urgently in need of men to fill vacancies for which there were insufficient volunteers. To meet this situation men born in the second half of 1904, who registered under the National Service Acts in January 1941, were given the option of service in the Police War Reserve or the National Fire Service as an alternative to the Armed Forces. In April 1941 a more decisive step was taken. An additional National Service Act was passed, which among other things gave the Minister of Labour power to call up for service in a Civil Defence Force men who were liable for service in the Armed Forces. Accordingly, it was decided that in future allocations should be made to the Police War Reserve, the National Fire Service and the Civil Defence Reserve from two classes of men: (a) new registrants under the National Service Acts who were over the age of thirty on the day of their registration; and (b) men who in consequence of the revision of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations had lost their reservation and were over twenty-five years of age on their prescribed registration day. For the most part the necessary numbers were obtained from those who expressed a preference for Civil Defence,² but for a short time it was necessary to call up for the National Fire Service men who had not opted for that Service. Postings to the Police War Reserve were suspended in December 1942, and to the National Fire Service in July 1943; but a few men continued to be allocated to the Civil Defence Reserve until as late as October 1944. At these respective dates the numbers allocated under the National Service Acts were as follows: Police War Reserve, 5,700; National Fire Service, 24,400; and Civil Defence Reserve, 260.

In December 1941 a new Defence Regulation (29BA)³ was made, which authorised the Minister of Labour to direct men and women to join the Civil Defence Services, the Royal Observer Corps and the Special Constabulary, for either whole or part-time service. The effect of this regulation was that in future local offices could direct persons registered under the Registration for Employment Order to Civil Defence as an alternative to industrial employment, and those directed were given a right of appeal on grounds of exceptional hardship to Local Appeal Boards. Up to September 1944, when the use of directions for this purpose was discontinued, approximately 273,000 had been sent to one or other of the branches of Civil Defence.

Lastly, in January 1942 an Order in Council⁴ was made under which

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report 1939-1946*, pp. 29-30.

² See Statistical Appendix, Table VI, note (4).

³ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 2052.

⁴ S.R. & O. 1942, No. 91.

the Minister of Labour could direct men to enrol in the Home Guard, with the exception of those who were specifically excepted by the National Service Act of 1939, or who were on the register of conscientious objectors. Those directed were given an opportunity to appeal on grounds of exceptional hardship, medical fitness and conscientious objection. The scheme remained in force until September 1944 when approximately 946,000 directions had been issued.

CHAPTER X

THE MANPOWER OUTLOOK

IN 1942

DECEMBER 1941 was for the history of manpower a month of important decisions and events. At home legislation was passed which placed an obligation on all men and women between the ages of eighteen and sixty to carry out some form of National Service, and by which women could be conscripted into the Auxiliary Services in much the same way as men had been called up for the Forces. Although the peak of mobilisation was not to be reached till September 1943, with the making of the Control of Engagement Order for women in the new year¹ all the instruments by which it was to be effected were in the hands of the Government. Abroad the outstanding event was the entry of America into the war. This heralded the end of the period in which Britain had had to frame her war policy in accordance with the manpower which she herself could provide and the materials which she could make herself or received in loans or gifts. In future strategy would be planned and programmes of production drawn up by the two allies in consultation with each other. If at the time there were some who believed or hoped that the pooling of resources would lighten the burden which the United Kingdom would be asked to carry, the sequel was to show that the contrary was the case and that even greater demands were still to be placed upon her manpower.²

The survey of the autumn of 1941, which had been generally accepted by the Government, had assessed the anticipated requirements of the two main competitors—the Forces and the munitions industries—at something between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$ million more men and women up to June 1942,³ and had attempted to indicate the sources from which they would have to come. But in the global figures of demand no less than in the proposed measures for supplementing the supply there were a number of unresolved uncertainties. The intake into the Forces over the next six months was agreed, and the prospect of achieving it had been made reasonably certain by the extension of liability for military service to men at either end of the existing age range and by the application of the National Service Acts to women.

¹ Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order, 22nd January 1942 (S.R. & O. 1942, No. 100).

² See M. M. Postan: *British War Production* p. 198.

³ See above p. 110.

On the other hand, the requirements of industry as they appeared in the survey were in the nature of overall estimates, which it had not been found practicable to break down against the needs of the three supply departments. These speculative assessments had been left unexamined by the War Cabinet, nor had it expressed any opinion on the contribution that what were now called the less essential industries¹ should be required to provide, with one important exception. The labour force of the building industry, so the Prime Minister directed, should be reduced in three stages—from 920,000 to 792,000 in the first three months of 1942; to 600,000 when the summer building season was passed, and finally to 500,000 by the end of 1943. Here it appeared was a substantial reservoir of manpower out of which the younger men could be called up for the Forces and the older transferred to more essential employment. Whatever relief the planners might hope to derive from this inroad upon a single industry was, however, soon offset by a new and formidable demand for more munition workers, which arose in this way.

On 7th September 1941 the Prime Minister decided that there must be a drastic increase in the output of heavy and medium sized bombers. At this stage of the war the only way in which Britain could take the offensive against Germany at home was by sustained attack from the air, but for the carrying out of this strategy the supply of bombers was insufficient. With a view to building up the first line strength of the R.A.F. the Ministry of Aircraft Production had already drawn up a programme for a planned increase of 11,000 heavy and medium sized bombers to be completed by July 1943. The Prime Minister asked that this target should be raised by a further 3,500. The Ministry did not conceal the difficulties that it saw in carrying out these instructions and could not promise that an increase of more than 1,074 additional bombers, as compared with the 3,500 for which the Prime Minister had asked, would be ready in two years' time. This revised estimate, which subsequently had to be further cut, was accepted by the War Cabinet. In terms of manpower the combined programme of bomber output was assessed at no less than 850,000 additional workers—the great majority of them women—of whom 360,000 would be needed before the end of June 1942. Thus, if the forecast of the Ministry of Aircraft Production was accepted, the requirements of the munitions industries as a whole up to mid-1942, which in the survey had been put at 620,000, would have to be scaled up to close on a million more workers—an increase of 58 per cent. How were these chimerical claims to be transformed into practical propositions? One thing was at least apparent: an equitable adjustment of demands to the shrinking supply of available labour could no longer be confined to striking a balance between

¹ See below p. 175.

the Forces and the munitions industries taken as a whole. Within the industrial group it would be further essential to examine the competing claims of the three supply departments in relation to each other, and to make some broad assessment of the amount of new labour that each might reasonably expect to recruit. Should this turn out to be seriously deficient, it would then be for consideration whether the production programme should be curtailed or the size of the Forces reduced, or some modifications made in both.

By now, however, there was serious questioning of the prevailing practice by which the Ministry of Labour was under an obligation to meet in full the manpower demands of the Services as laid down by the Defence Committee, whilst essential industrial requirements had to be satisfied out of what was left over. Had not the time come to treat the supply departments in the same way as the Services and give to each of them an entitlement to a specified amount of labour within which it could plan its output? On the other hand it was argued that a system of global allocations of labour was in principle unobjectionable enough, but there was the danger that in practice the supply departments would be more concerned to secure their full quotas than to make an economical use of the workers they already had. It would be better if the distribution of industrial labour remained within the discretion of the Ministry of Labour. Finally, the Lord President's Committee agreed to recommend that under the supervision of the Production Executive arrangements should be made for working out the global requirements of the supply departments so that each would have a firm basis upon which to make its production plans, and to this proposal the War Cabinet gave its general approval.

With the demise of the Production Executive early in 1942 the implementation of this policy fell to the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. After examining the results that had been achieved in the second half of 1941 as compared with the expectations of the autumn survey, the Committee invited the three supply departments to submit revised forecasts of their needs in the calendar year 1942, with a view to arriving at some realistic assessment of the further numbers of workers that would be required. The estimates made by the Admiralty and the Ministry of Supply of the units of labour that would be required to carry out the anticipated expansion of Government work in the industries which supplied their needs were on a scale that the Committee were able to accept. On the other hand the programme of the Ministry of Aircraft Production envisaged such large additional numbers of workers that the question was referred to higher authority and, as will appear, a decision was not reached until later in the year.

SPRING SURVEY OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR

In April the Ministry of Labour presented a short survey of the current manpower position. This contained estimates of labour requirements for the rest of the year derived from information furnished by the supply departments, and a calculation of available manpower based upon the quarterly employment returns from industry of the numbers of men and women in the different groups of industry. Having to be made some months in advance of the annual exchange of insurance books the computations were to an appreciable degree tentative but, as the survey was considerably used by statisticians in the intervening months, its main conclusions may be profitably summarised.

Manpower requirements from April 1942 to December 1942 were stated as follows:

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
Armed Forces and Auxiliary Services.	468,500	227,000	695,000
Munitions . . .	221,000	443,000	664,000
Admiralty . . .	38,000	34,000	72,000
Ministry of Supply	80,000	171,000	251,000
Ministry of Aircraft Production . . .	103,000	238,000	341,000
Grand Total . . .	689,500	670,000	1,359,000

On the supply side the survey indicated the sources from which the additional personnel would have to be drawn without attempting to estimate the contributions that each might be expected to make. Apart from 270,000 available under current arrangements for call-up and posting, the remaining demands for men both for the Forces and the munitions industries would have to be met by withdrawals from the building and other non-munitions industries. On the women's side the non-essential industries, particularly the distributive trades, would have to yield a considerable quota, but the requisite total could not be reached unless large numbers at present not in employment or in occupations such as private domestic service were drawn into insured employment.

In a memorandum to the Prime Minister the Minister of Labour commented upon some of the salient features which emerged from the survey. While the total population in April 1942 showed little change from mid-1939, the numbers occupied in the Forces, Civil Defence, industry and services had increased by over two millions—an addition

of half a million, it should be noted, since midsummer 1941—so that two out of every three were now in that category. In two and a half years over three and a half million men had been recruited into the Armed Forces and Civil Defence, and nearly one and a half million women from the unoccupied classes had gone into the Auxiliary Services and industry. From these figures the Minister drew the following conclusion. 'We have now deployed our main forces and called heavily upon our reserves. We cannot expect to draw many more from the unoccupied, though of course I still hope to get in a considerable number of women especially for part-time employment. Further demands for the Forces must in the main be met from production. To make this good and maintain essential services something can still be obtained from the redistribution of labour within the field of industry and services, but our main reliance must be upon increased efficiency in management to secure the best use of the resources which we have.'

A MINISTRY OF PRODUCTION

Meanwhile the first tentative arrangements with America for the joint planning of supply led to a close examination of production programmes and the resources required for their execution.¹ In February 1942 a White Paper announced that a Minister of Production was to be appointed charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating production planning. It seems at first to have been assumed in the offices of the new Minister—a fully fledged department was not set up until 13th July 1942—that manpower allocation at any rate in its broader aspects was one of the subjects which could properly be regarded as falling within his sphere. But this was not generally accepted. Manpower allocation, it was pointed out, was a matter for which the Minister of Labour was responsible to the War Cabinet, and the Minister of Production's concern in manpower could not be regarded as extending beyond the munitions programme. Moreover, even within this restricted field it was not the business of the Minister and his advisers, it was suggested, to deal with the allocation of labour. This was the function of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, which had been set up with the express purpose of considering production programmes in terms of manpower. If the full numbers required could not be obtained, it was for that body to indicate the extent to which demands must be reduced, and for those responsible for production planning to decide in what forms of production the cuts should be effected.

There was no doubt a good deal to be said for this opposition to the intrusion of a new group of officials with little experience of manpower problems into the field of labour supply, when this was being satisfactorily handled under the existing inter-departmental arrangements.

¹ See further M. M. Postan, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-3.

On the other hand, the Minister of Production was in a difficult position. Not only was he expected to advise on the co-ordination of production at home, but he had also the much harder task of trying to reach agreement with America on the contributions which each ally should respectively make. If he was to present an effective case, he would need, he felt, to be fully informed about specific types of production where materials were scarce and manpower was short. To assist him in the collation of the data a Joint War Production Staff was, therefore, set up and given the task of keeping under review the steps proposed for providing out of the resources of the allied nations the munitions required by the combined strategic plan, and of advising the Minister on necessary adjustments in the United Kingdom production programme. As the new body was too unwieldy to attend to the day-to-day problems, it set up a Planning Group to which detailed questions were referred for examination and report.

Both the parent body and its planning group soon became aware of the difficulty of forming a properly critical appraisal of the munitions demands of the Services without going closely into the shortages of labour which were holding up the armament programme. In May a survey of the situation was made by one of the members of the Group under the title 'The Practicability of Present Programmes'. The manpower calculations which it contained were based on figures taken from the Ministry of Labour April Survey, and the inferences drawn were similar except in one respect. The new report emphasised the alleged low level of productivity and expressed the confident belief that, if this were pushed up, there would not only be enough labour to carry out existing programmes but a margin for further expansion. This argument, however, lost much of its force when it appeared that neither its author nor the J.W.P.S. could discover what additional productivity per head would be required, or for that matter could be reasonably expected.

Discussion on pooling of resources with the Americans, which proceeded during the summer of 1942, dissipated such hopes as may have been entertained of some relief of the burden falling on the United Kingdom. The deficiency of small Naval craft on both sides of the Atlantic was so large that every corner of shipyard capacity would have to be used. The effect of the alliance on the Air Programme was, it is true, still undetermined, but the prospect of some alleviation was not bright, while it did not seem probable that for a long time to come there could be any slackening in the output of munitions for the Army. In a situation so full of uncertainties there seemed little point in venturing to predict developments in the coming eighteen months. It would be better to wait until the Ministry of Labour produced its autumn survey based on the exchange of insurance books. Nevertheless, about mid-summer the J.W.P.S., contrary to the advice of the Ministry of Labour,

attempted a forecast of its own, which was entitled 'The 1943 Production Programme'. Its prognostications were of an alarmist character. In the coming twenty-one months the Forces and munitions industries would together require, it was estimated, two million more bodies, and Ministers should understand that nothing like so many could be found even with every conceivable form of comb-out. Familiar remedies were then advocated—the utmost economy in the use of labour and, taking over an idea which had been put forward by the Lord President in the previous autumn, the fixing of a definite ceiling of manpower for the three supply departments. In view of the uncertainty of its statistics the J.W.P.S. was, however, unable to make any specific proposal for the re-allocation of labour, and without this Ministers had not the data upon which to reach decisions. Thus the survey largely failed in its purpose because it was untimely and to an extent inexpert. Negatively, however, it may have served to indicate the wisdom of leaving to the Ministry which had the necessary experience the task of collecting and analysing manpower statistics and advising on possible methods for adjusting supply and demand.

ADDITIONAL DEMANDS OF THE SERVICES

The survey of the Ministry of Labour was not expected to be ready until about the end of September, but there were two questions vitally affecting the allocation of manpower which could hardly be left so long unanswered. The first was the adequacy of the current intake into the Army within the limits of the agreed ceiling to meet new commitments. The second was the amount of additional labour which would be required to carry out the enlarged programme of heavy bombers. The former arose for the first time in June 1942; upon the latter, as we have seen, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee had not found it possible to reach agreement.

The general case for an increase in the authorised strength of the Army, as presented in the War Office memorandum, was that since the ceiling had been fixed at 2,374,000 there had been substantial changes in the strategic situation. Japan and America had entered the war and the essential rôle of the British Army was no longer mainly defensive. Additional troops had had to be moved to the Far East and units taken for this purpose from East Africa would have to be replaced. Wastage and casualties among British personnel recruited locally in overseas areas would also have to be made good. Three more divisions than had been provided under the original programme were to be sent abroad and, although complete for action in this country, would have to be brought up to overseas strength with additional personnel for duties behind the firing line. Moreover, before the Army at home could be made ready to fight on the Continent its specialist elements (engineers, signals, and pioneers, etc.) would have to be strengthened.

Lastly, there had been a short-fall of some 90,000 in the numbers recruited for the A.T.S., and this had delayed the setting free of soldiers for other duties from jobs which women could do. Put together these factors, it was concluded, constituted a strong case for going above the authorised ceiling.

The War Office memorandum was submitted at the Prime Minister's direction to a Ministerial Committee consisting of the Lord President, the Minister of Labour and the Secretary of State for War. After a close examination of the detailed claims it was agreed that there was a theoretical case for raising the ceiling by 100,000 together with such additions as might be needed to replace wastage and casualties among British personnel recruited locally in overseas theatres of war. If the present authorised strength were regarded not as a fixed, but as an average target, this would give a desirable flexibility and would enable the ceiling to be raised at times when men were available to offset times when the supply would run short. The Minister of Labour was hopeful that he would be able to provide the additional numbers, but there might be some delay. This was due to uncertainty about the date at which hutments and air bases which were being constructed for the American troops in the United Kingdom under what was called the Bolero scheme would be completed. 28,000 men in the building industry had had to have their call-up deferred, and it might be that a further 70,000 due to be withdrawn from the industry for the Forces would not be available as soon as was expected. As to the short-fall for the A.T.S., which was to some extent due to the inability of the War Office in the early weeks of the year to accept all the women it was offered, special efforts would be made to speed up the rate of intake, but it seemed unlikely, the Minister added, that the full requirement of the War Office would be met by the end of the year.

The Lord President was at the beginning of September about to submit a full report to the Prime Minister when a new development occurred. The War Office had, at the Prime Minister's request, been making a detailed review of what might be expected to be the state of preparation of the Army in April 1943, and it had come to the conclusion that an additional quarter of a million men would be needed. Meanwhile a further complication had arisen. The Minister of Labour's belief that he would be able to find an additional 100,000 for the Army was on the assumption that the Air Force intake for the year would not be substantially above the 117,000 sanctioned in December 1941. The Air Ministry had now indicated that it would require a further 120,000 and, although this figure was subsequently reduced by 45,000, this was on the condition that the 30,000 mechanics who had been lent to the aircraft industry would be returned to the Service.

The Prime Minister directed that the proposed additional intake

for the Air Force should be cut by half, and asked the Lord President to try and end the 'private war' between the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Aircraft Production about the aircraft mechanics. Soon afterwards the Admiralty put in a claim for an additional 22,000 men. Pending discussion on the Ministry of Labour's autumn survey which had just become available, the Lord President in the middle of October submitted short term recommendations on the scales of intake for the three services until the end of the calendar year. The Navy's requirements should be met in full; the Army intake in November and December should be raised by 32,000; the Air Force should have 3,700 a week, but this number should include R.A.F. mechanics to be returned from the aircraft industry at the rate of 500 a month by individual selection. These increases for the Services could, the Lord President suggested, be met by lowering the age of call-up from 18½ to 18; by calling up the 28,000 men on deferment in the building industry, and by drawing on the Royal Air Force Deferred List¹, which on the 1st July 1942 stood at 47,500.

THE BOMBER PROGRAMME

The second problem, which the Labour Co-ordinating Committee had been unable to resolve, was the size of the labour force required for the aircraft programme. On this the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Ministry of Labour held irreconcilable views.² The former, with an understandable anxiety that production, subject as it was to all sorts of hazards due to modifications in design or unexpected stoppages in the supply of materials, should not be held up by labour shortages, deliberately pitched its global demands, which were based on the forecasts of its manufacturers, at a level which would give a margin of safety. On the other side, the Ministry of Labour argued that the demands made by employers were notoriously exaggerated and unreliable, and that aircraft firms were in fact obtaining through the employment exchanges all the new labour they could effectively absorb. From time to time during the early summer months of 1942 the Defence Committee received conflicting reports about the labour position; the Minister of Aircraft Production complained that his target had not been achieved, the Minister of Labour countered with the assurance that, although there were outstanding vacancies at the exchanges, employers were getting about as many workers as they could productively employ. In this impasse it was decided to hold an independent enquiry and the task was entrusted to the Lord President and the Minister of Production.

Investigators were sent out to the regions to examine the methods by

¹ The Royal Air Force Deferred List consisted of men who had passed certain preliminary tests for flying duties, but who were left in civil life until they were needed.

² See P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter VII (vi).

which employers attempted to forecast their requirements, and what they found was not reassuring. The estimates, they reported, even when vetted by knowledgeable Government officials were for long term budgeting quite useless, and even for more immediate needs were not always reliable. 'A firm knows,' they observed, 'that its figures for a year ahead must be a shot in the dark and may tend to treat its estimates for the next three months in much the same way.' The investigators had in consequence been unable to arrive at any practical method of measuring the deficiency in the aircraft industry's labour force at mid-summer 1942 but, with a view to indicating the numbers that would be required in the next five months, they reached agreement on a total of 207,900. On 7th October, however, the War Cabinet decided that it would be better to concentrate attention on specific points in the aircraft programme where it could be demonstrated that labour was definitely scarce rather than to attempt to satisfy large demands couched in global figures, and the two Ministers thereupon stopped their independent enquiries.

AUTUMN SURVEY OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR

While these specific problems were being dealt with, the Ministry of Labour was hastening to produce its autumn survey. This survey, which reached the Lord President's Committee late in October, marked an important development in the technique of manpower budgeting. Alike in comprehensiveness and in the skill with which statistics were marshalled and analysed it far surpassed earlier essays in this field and was to become the model on which future reviews were planned. The survey was broadly divided into three parts. After a comparative conspectus of the distribution of the population in 1942 and 1939, the central and most lengthy section was devoted to an examination of the current distribution of manpower in separate groups of industries. Changes in age structures were indicated; the number of fit men of military age not yet called up was assessed; and special attention was given to the extent to which women had been taken on as substitutes for men who had already been withdrawn for the Forces. With a view to setting out the relative importance of different industries to the war effort a new method of classification was introduced. Industries were divided into three main groups. In the first (Group I) came the munitions industries; in the second (Group II) 'essential industries', which comprised agriculture, mining, national and local government, public utility services, transport and food; while in the third (Group III) were placed the heterogeneous remainder—ranging from the professions through the building industry and textiles to the distributive trades and laundries—which were collectively styled 'less essential'.¹ This arrangement, though necessarily

¹ See note to Table 16.

arbitrary, had the merit of simplicity and provided a ready means of separating the chief war industries from other categories of production and service. The second part of the survey summarised the most up-to-date manpower requirements of the Forces and supply departments for the year ending mid-1943 at a total of between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$ million people, and in the concluding section the available supply of men and women under existing arrangements was set out and proposals made of ways in which the gap between supply and demand might be further narrowed.

In a covering memorandum the Minister of Labour emphasised the main lessons of the survey; the mobilisation of the manpower of the country had reached a stage where, on the basis of the latest demands, there were not sufficient men and women to meet the requirements of both the Forces and industry and at the same time to maintain the necessary civilian standards and amenities. If the Forces, he added, had not been making increased demands, it would be just possible to meet their requirements and provide the necessary workers to fulfil the existing munitions programme, but even so this would involve the mobilisation of a large number of women for part-time work.

Despite the care taken in the survey to indicate practical possibilities for easing the manpower stringency, it was essentially a statistical review and its detailed computations were for the layman not easy to comprehend. It was not the sort of document upon which Ministers could be expected to reach policy decisions. The Prime Minister, accordingly, invited the Lord President, as on similar occasions he had done in the past, to focus for submission to the War Cabinet the issues arising out of the survey. Preliminary investigations made two things apparent. First, the past practice of drawing up a schedule of agreed requirements for the consideration of the War Cabinet and then inviting the Minister of Labour to find the bodies would no longer do. The approach must now be from the opposite angle: the number of men and women that it might be hoped to obtain must first be ascertained and then the demand must be adapted to the available supply. Secondly, unless a substantial proportion of the labour employed in less essential industries were withdrawn, there was no hope of even approaching the requirements of the Forces and the munitions industries. Large adjustments in domestic policy must, therefore, be accepted as inevitable. But in considering what was to be done the planners were faced with the same awkward situation as in 1941. By the time the War Cabinet would have made its decisions half the year under review in the Ministry of Labour survey would be over, and less than half would be left in which the results of any new dispositions would become effective. It was accordingly decided, with some misgivings by the Ministry of Labour, to extend the budget review so as to cover the whole of 1943. New scales of requirements

were quickly furnished both by the Services and by the Ministry of Production for the munitions industries and, although a considerable element of doubt necessarily attached to the figures for the second half of the year, the totals were accepted as reasonably reliable forecasts. Towards the end of November the Lord President presented his report, and it was on this revised version of the survey, which may conveniently be summarised, that the War Cabinet took its decisions.

The manpower requirements of the Armed Forces and industry for the eighteen months ending 31st December 1943 were put at a global figure of 2·689 million men and women made up as shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Manpower Requirements—1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943

ARMED FORCES					
<i>Actual intake</i>					
<i>July to October</i>					
<i>and approved</i>					
<i>intake</i>					
<i>November to</i>					
<i>December 1942</i>					
			<i>Intake</i>		<i>Total</i>
			<i>required</i>		
			<i>in 1943</i>		
Men:					
Navy	77,000		210,000		287,000
Army	208,000		441,000		649,000
R.A.F.	120,000		245,000		365,000
	405,000		896,000		1,301,000
Women:					
Navy	12,000		24,000		36,000
Army	54,000		106,000		160,000
R.A.F.	54,500		52,500		107,000
	120,500		182,500		303,000
INDUSTRY					
			<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
Munitions industries	236,000		701,000		937,000
Other industries and services	14,000		134,000		148,000
	250,000		835,000		1,085,000
TOTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ARMED FORCES AND INDUSTRY					
1,551,000 men 1,138,000 women					
<i>Global total = 2·689 millions</i>					

To meet these requirements the maximum number likely to be available was reckoned at 950,000 men and 650,000 women—or a total supply of 1·6 millions against a total demand for over 2·6 millions. Moreover, in arriving at this figure of 1·6 millions a number of calculations had been made which might well prove to be unduly optimistic. It had, for example, been assumed that 500,000 more

workers could be withdrawn from the less essential industries, and that the equivalent of half a million full-time workers could be found from among women in the unoccupied classes. As most of the latter would be married women who would only be able to do part-time work, the actual number who would have to be drawn into employment might well be not far short of a million. Moreover, the total supply of 1.6 millions included 700,000 for the Forces. If these were to be found, every fit man of military age in the building industry would have to be called up and, in addition, 565,000 would have to be withdrawn by drastic combing out from industry in the proportion of 115,000 from the munitions industries, 150,000 from essential industries and 300,000 (representing three-quarters of their remaining fit men) from the less essential group. Again, to build up the labour force of the munitions industries it would be necessary to transfer mobile women from areas where immobile women were available to areas where there was no such local supply. Even if all these possibilities materialised there would still be a gap of over a million, and more than half of this deficiency would fall on the Armed Forces.

In fine, manpower resources did not match the current programmes. Service strengths had been planned in the past on the assumption that a substantial proportion of supplies required to equip them would be forthcoming from America, and manpower policy had been framed in the hope that from 1943 onwards the munitions industries would have passed their peak and would be able to contribute increasing numbers of men to the Armed Forces. These assumptions had turned out to be mistaken. Since America's entry into the war the United Kingdom had had to face the necessity of supplying from her own resources a large proportion of the equipment which she had expected to draw from her ally, and in consequence the manpower on which she had counted for the continued expansion of the Armed Forces would now have to be retained in the munitions industries. It followed, the Lord President concluded, that substantial cuts would have to be made in the present programme of the Armed Forces and strategical considerations would have to decide where the reductions should be made.

The necessity for a readjustment of current programmes so as to bring requirements within the compass of the limited supply of available manpower was accepted by the Prime Minister. In a note to his Ministerial colleagues he reviewed the probable developments in the strategic situation. The greatest danger was from the U-boats and the Admiralty must give priority over all other items in its labour programme to the provision of ships and weapons to combat the attack. On the other hand, it was improbable that air attacks would be repeated on the scale of 1940-1941, and the threat of invasion was now remote. Moreover, it might be assumed that with the exception of the North African and Mediterranean areas the Army would not in the

near future be engaged in large scale fighting with heavy casualties and expenditure of ammunition. These factors, together with the pruning of ancillary units and staff establishments, should enable the War Office to make its necessary dispositions within the numbers already allocated to it and should reduce substantially its demand for equipment upon the Ministry of Supply. As for war in the air it was at present more important to increase the output of aircraft than the number of officers and other ranks in the Air Force. With these considerations in mind the Prime Minister then set out the proportionate cuts which he thought should fall on the three Services, Civil Defence and industry. His proposed distribution of sacrifices, as was to be expected, did not pass uncriticised. In particular the Minister of Labour would have liked to see the Services more kindly treated and the cuts fall more heavily upon the shipbuilding and aircraft industries, as he did not believe that either of them would be able to expand at a rate substantially greater than had so far been found practicable. However, after the Service Ministers and the Minister of Production had reported on the modifications which the cuts would impose on their programmes, the War Cabinet approved on 11th December, with certain amendments (see Table 18), the Prime Minister's proposed allocation of manpower for the period 1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943, on the understanding that the situation would be reviewed in five months time.

Table 18: Manpower Allocations—1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943

	Original demands	Cuts in demand		Allocation approved
		Prime Minister's proposals	Finally authorised	
Admiralty				
Navy	323,000			} 434,000
Shipbuilding	186,000	— 75,000	— 75,000	
Army	809,000	— 380,000	— 380,000	} 351,000
Ministry of Supply	148,000	— 215,000	— 226,000	
R.A.F.	472,000	— 225,000	— 225,000	} 750,000
M.A.P.	603,000	— 75,000	— 100,000	
Civil Defence	13,000	— 100,000	— 75,000	— 75,000
Miscellaneous	135,000	— 19,000	— 19,000	116,000
Total	2,689,000	—1,089,000	—1,100,000	1,576,000

CHAPTER XI

THE MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

IN 1942

THE YEAR 1942 opened with what was to be for the Ministry of Labour the hardest task it had so far handled in mobilising the manpower of the country. The Armed Forces had not yet reached their full strength and, to keep pace with their requirements, a greatly expanded programme of arms and equipment had been drawn up. With the growing shortage of manpower there were only two ways in which these heavy demands could be met. There would have to be a large scale redistribution of men and women already in employment, and tens of thousands of women would have to be drawn into industry, whether as full-time or part-time workers, from amongst the so-called unoccupied classes. The policy was clear; its implementation was far from simple. All over the country there were wide disparities in the correlation of labour supply and demand. Some regions—notably the Midlands and North West—were congested with production and were overcrowded with workers as a result of the large numbers who had had to be imported. By contrast, in other regions where there was less industrialisation there were areas in which the supply of immobile labour was in excess of local requirements.

There were two possible ways of correcting this unbalance of manpower—by placing new orders with firms outside the congested areas, and by reducing to a minimum inside congested areas the volume of manufacture for the civilian consumer market. Neither course was free from difficulty. In 1941-42 the supply departments were in placing their contracts paying more attention than in the first year of the war to the availability of labour; but manpower was still not the only, nor necessarily the chief, consideration in determining their choice. Changes in strategic plans, involving new types of arms and equipment, were constantly arising and not infrequently there were only one or two firms with the skill and experience to produce what was urgently wanted. And there was a further difficulty. It was a normal practice for firms which had received an order from a supply department to let out parts of it to sub-contractors. But, although firms were exhorted to have regard to the availability of labour, they tended to disregard the admonitions and to choose the sub-contractors of whom they had experience, regardless of where their factories were situated. Thus sub-contracting—which it was virtually impossible for a supply department to control—instead of lightening tended to increase the demand

for labour where it was already scarce. The second line of attack on the problem—the reduction and, if possible, the elimination of industries manufacturing for the home market in congested munitions areas—achieved a limited success. Some of the concentration schemes, for example those for cotton, hosiery and pottery, did release considerable numbers of workers who were placed in Royal Ordnance Factories and aircraft firms. But the more drastic solution of removing civilian manufacture out of what were known as ‘red’ and ‘scarlet’ areas and concentrating its production where labour was relatively easy proved to a large extent impracticable because of the very small number of firms in these industries that were situated in ‘green’ areas.

The outlook at the beginning of 1942 was certainly daunting, and throughout the year the labour supply situation gave rise to continuing anxiety. Against the pressure to find for munitions firms the workers whom they genuinely needed—let alone the numbers they believed they required—had to be set the danger of making too drastic cuts in the labour forces of industries and services whose maintenance was essential to the life and morale of the country. This was the problem with which the Ministry of Labour had to wrestle, and although, with the exception of the Armed Forces, it did not succeed in satisfying all the other claimants for manpower, nevertheless, 1942 was a year of solid achievement. The story of the difficulties that arose and of the methods that were improvised to overcome them will perhaps best be told by illustrations from a selected number of industries.

(i)

Labour Problems of Particular Industries

(a) ENGINEERING AND SHIPBUILDING

In the engineering and allied industries the two factors that were at the root of the labour supply difficulties were an absolute deficiency of workers in certain highly skilled occupations and, secondly, in consequence of the call-up the dwindling supply of men available for the large variety of ordinary processing jobs. Some of these were heavy and could only be done by men of physical strength; others were of a lighter character and called for alertness of mind and a competent pair of hands.

By its very nature the first of these two problems could not be fully resolved—there was not time in which to train young men, even if they had been available, to acquire the skill of craftsmen—but a number of effective palliatives were adopted. As a temporary expedient some thousands of mechanics were released by the Royal Air Force to assist in the output of aircraft; of more permanent value was the redistribution of skilled men employed on civilian work. The labour supply

inspectors of the Ministry of Labour had by now acquired the necessary technical knowledge for judging where skilled men were being properly and effectively used, and in the course of visits to firms they were able to identify workers who were either not fully employed on work which called for their skill, or were employed on production which was of less importance to the prosecution of the war than the output of other firms which was being held up by the lack of skilled labour. Wherever possible, steps were taken to obtain the release of skilled men by agreement with their employers, and to this end the efforts of the Ministry of Labour were much assisted by the active co-operation of the Engineering Employers' Federation. A particularly successful example was the transfer of 300 skilled men from the few hundred smaller firms in the machine tool industry to larger firms whose full capacity was not being used. But redistribution of skill, whether within the same firm or from one firm to another, could not alone redress the balance. It was further necessary to reduce the number of vacancies for fully skilled men by breaking down jobs, so that parts of them could be done after training by less skilled workers, and in the current stringency of manpower that meant by women. By the beginning of 1942 the need for dilution had been widely accepted, but there was still in the minds of some employers a disbelief in the ability of women to do jobs which had customarily been the province of men. With a view to overcoming these prejudices an illustrated handbook, entitled 'Women in Engineering', was produced with technical photographs showing the range of operations in the industry which were being successfully performed by women.

From here, however, a further step forward was necessary. Keeping pace with the demands of the filling factories and aircraft firms for young and mobile women had made great inroads on the available supply of full-time workers, and in future dilution would have to be largely carried out by the engagement of local women who could only work for part of the day. To educate employers to this new idea, labour supply inspectors were given particulars of processes which were suitable for part-time workers, and the practicability of the scheme was gradually accepted by a considerable number of firms. The success of these efforts may be judged by the results. Between March and December 1942 the number of part-time women employed in the engineering and allied industries had risen from 19,750 to 110,000, and in the machine tool industry, which before the war had employed no women, 27 per cent. of their labour force was now composed of women, many of them on a part-time basis.

The second problem was the provision of workers for jobs for the performance of which no high degree of skill was required. For the heavier types strong men were essential; for the lighter men could not be spared and women in large numbers would have to be found. Let

us look at the ways in which these needs were tackled. Of the two the task of finding men to fill vacancies requiring physical strength was in many ways the more intractable because of the drain of fit men for the Armed Forces. Moreover, many of the jobs as, for example, drop-forging, were heavy and unpleasant and without compensating high rates of wages. As with the deficiency of highly skilled workers, the most promising solution was along the lines of redistribution. The expectation, however, that considerable numbers might be forthcoming from some of the concentration schemes, particularly that for the boot and shoe industry, was not fulfilled, and it was soon apparent that the best prospect lay within the munitions industries themselves. Instructions were, accordingly, issued by the Ministry of Labour to its local offices that in general men who could be replaced by women should be transferred to skilled or semi-skilled work which was too heavy for female labour. This sorting out process was inevitably slow and the yield was well below the number of vacancies that remained unfilled. Steps were, therefore, taken to import workers from Eire and with the assistance obtained from this source some of the more urgent demands—in the ballbearing industry, for example—had by the end of the calendar year been satisfied.¹

Of the lighter jobs that were suitable for women large numbers were in the Royal Ordnance Factories, many of which, such as those at Chorley and Swynnerton, were situated in areas where little local labour was available. This meant that the vacancies could only be filled by women who were able to leave their homes and live in hostels in the neighbourhood of their new employment. This condition largely ruled out the married women and throughout 1942 the Ministry of Labour made continuous efforts to find young single women who could go, if necessary under direction, to munitions work away from their homes. The measures taken were of two kinds. First, young mobile women employed locally were, wherever possible, replaced by women who for personal or domestic reasons could only go to work within daily travelling distance of their homes. This policy was facilitated by the Control of Engagement Order made at the beginning of 1942, which obliged all women between the ages of twenty and thirty—with the exception of those who had children under fourteen living with them—to obtain their employment through an employment exchange. Secondly, to increase the supply of young women it was decided in April to register the nineteen-year-olds and make them available for transfer to approved employment in other parts of the country. The success which attended these and other administrative schemes will be more fully discussed later in the chapter on the Contribution of Women to the War Effort.²

¹ See further P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter VI (i) and (ii).

² See Chapter XVII.

A particular labour supply problem arose in the railway workshops. In the first year of the war the railway companies had been reluctant to make their spare capacity available for the manufacture of munitions, and had strongly resisted the demands of the Ministry of Labour for the release of a proportion of their skilled workers. After protracted negotiations some 2,000 workers, including a considerable number of boilermakers for transfer to the shipyards, had been extracted, but to the introduction of dilution as a means of freeing more skilled workers the managers and workers were resolutely opposed. In the autumn of 1941 a new situation arose. There was an urgent need for more locomotives both for overseas and to replace the worn out engines at home. This new demand was clearly one which the railway companies in their own interests would be anxious to fulfil, but it was not in their opinion reasonable to expect them to make locomotives and munitions at the same time. There was substance in this contention, and a decision was reached that, with the urgent need for more engines, the railway workshops should not be called upon to continue the production of munitions. Floor space and labour would thus be set free for the turn-out of locomotives. Significantly enough the railway companies and the unions concerned were now prepared to sign a dilution agreement, but they were by no means satisfied that this would solve their labour requirements. Additional workers would be needed and, above all, the boilermakers who had been taken away must be returned. The Ministry of Labour, on the other hand, was far from agreeing to the companies' estimate of their requirements. Between July and September 1942 it sent its labour supply inspectors to inspect each of the principal railway workshops, in order to ascertain to what extent the demand for skilled labour could be met from internal resources. Finally, towards the end of the year a sub-committee, consisting of representatives from all the railway companies under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour, was appointed to keep a general watch on the railways' demands and on the progress made in supplying the necessary labour to the workshops and running sheds. Between September 1942 and May 1943 the Ministry of Labour was filling vacancies at the rate of a hundred a week, but this did not relax the insistence of the railway companies that their boilermakers who had been transferred to the shipyards must be returned. Eventually, after an examination of the whole position by a panel of experts, the Admiralty agreed to the return of the loaned boilermakers to fill vacancies that had been vetted and approved by the Ministry of Labour—adding the condition that the railways should by dilution do all that they could to help themselves.

Perhaps the most imperative need of 1942 was the output of more ships and the speedier repair of those that had been damaged by enemy action. Shortage of skilled labour was especially acute in the shipyards,

and to ensure that the work was not held back because of this a number of measures were put in hand. In March 1941 there had, it will be remembered, been a special registration of men, wherever employed, who were skilled in one or more of the occupations in shipbuilding but, because of the importance of the work upon which they were engaged, considerable numbers had not been called upon to return to the shipyards. In May 1942 it was decided to comb the register with a view to finding 2,700 skilled men for the shipyards and by the end of the year upwards of 2,000 had actually been transferred, while the Ministry of Labour had placed 700 additional skilled men in marine engineering firms. Meanwhile every encouragement was given to employers—including the publication of a pamphlet similar to that issued to the engineering industry—to employ women, and by the end of the year the number taken on in the industry had risen by nearly 9,000. In Government Training Centres courses of training were provided for unskilled workers and a disused shipyard on the Clyde was used to train boys and youths in riveting.¹ At a mass meeting in September 1942 held in private and addressed by the First Lord and the Minister of Labour representatives of employers and workers pledged their full efforts to accelerate the output of ships. Nevertheless, the problem of how to provide the shipyards with the workers they required was to continue throughout the war and was never fully resolved.²

(b) THE ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES

In the group of essential industries³ the shortage of manpower in the coal-mines was causing great anxiety. The trouble had really begun in 1940 when, with the loss of the export Continental market, unemployed miners had been allowed to move into other forms of employment. Efforts made in the spring of 1941 to encourage a voluntary return to the pits had met with scant success and, although all ex-miners other than those in the Armed Forces were under the Registration for Employment Order required to register in July of that year, of the 105,000 who responded only 30,000 had by the end of the year gone back to the industry. The remainder were either on vital war work, from which it was felt inexpedient to move them, or were found physically unfit for underground mining. The situation was further deteriorating through the continued fall in the number of boys entering the industry after leaving school, and there was a real danger that insufficient coal would be produced to meet the increasing requirements of the munitions programme. There were thus in 1942 two separate problems—

¹ See also below pp. 382-383.

² See further P. Inman, *op. cit.*, Chapter V.

³ See above p. 175.

how to increase the number of skilled men, and how to stimulate young workers to enter the industry. To deal with the first a special drive was made to obtain the return from other industries of coal-face workers, and arrangements were made for the release from the Forces of certain categories of experienced miners. The results were not unrewarding; during the year some 23,000 returned to the pits, 13,000 from other industries and 10,000 from the Forces. Efforts to encourage young men to enter the industry had, by contrast, only a limited success. Those under twenty-five were at the time of their registration for National Service given the option of transferring to underground work as an alternative to going into the Forces, but between September 1942 when the scheme started and the end of the calendar year only about 1,100 had taken up coal-mining employment. To build up the labour force of the industry more radical expedients were later to be adopted.¹ Meanwhile looking further ahead, a committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Forster was set up to enquire into the reasons for the reluctance of boys to take up mining, and in July 1942 it issued its first report.²

In addition to coal-mining two other extractive industries were looking for additional labour. Throughout the war, especially after the cutting off of overseas supplies in the spring and summer of 1940, there were continuous demands for a greater output of iron-ore—the basic component of steel—and, when with the entry of Japan into the war imports of tin from the Far East were stopped, the loss had to be made good by an expansion of home production. The difficulty in finding labour lay not in the size of the demands which were relatively small, but in the nature and conditions of the employment and the places where some of the mines and quarries were situated. It was essentially work which only men of physical strength and fitness could carry out; it was unattractive because it was arduous, dirty and poorly paid, and exposed the worker to the danger of silicosis infection. In the iron-ore industry the mines which produced the valuable hematite were along the remote coast of West Cumberland, and tin was produced in scantily populated Cornwall. The situation was further complicated by the drift which had taken place between the wars of experienced workers to other forms of employment, and a nucleus of skilled men was required before additional unskilled labour could in any number be effectively used. The local offices of the Ministry of Labour approached this problem in the same way as they handled the comparable position in the coal-mines. Workers who had left iron-ore and tin mines were identified and invited to return to their previous employment. In the case of the tin mines the process was facilitated by the

¹ See below pp. 252-255.

² Committee on the Recruitment of Juveniles in the Coal Mining Industry, *First Report*, 20th July 1942.

willingness of a number of men who had migrated to the china clay industry from the adjacent tin mines to return to their old employment. On the other hand, the selection of experienced workers for return to iron-ore was much more difficult, because many of them had gone into the coal-mines from which it was clearly inexpedient to try to move them. Nevertheless, sufficient numbers were found to make it practicable to try and fill some of the vacancies for unskilled workers. With the great shortage of heavy labourers, who could in consequence choose more attractive and remunerative employment, this was not an easy task. The local office registers were combed out; steps were taken to import workers from Eire and to employ prisoners of war; and when the yield from these sources proved insufficient, it was decided, as had been done for coal-mining, to offer men when they registered for National Service the option of work in the iron-ore and tin mines as an alternative to going into the Armed Forces. By the end of 1942 this combination of methods, although not satisfying the full demands—which in any case were believed to be exaggerated—at least was successful in providing the two industries with a substantial number of additional workers.¹

(c) THE LESS ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES

Industries in the third group² were in a different position from those making munitions or engaged on essential production. They were to be the suppliers and not the recipients of labour. Within this group the largest consumers of manpower in times of peace were the building industry, the distributive trades and the heterogeneous body of industries manufacturing consumer goods. Under war conditions it was inevitable that the activities of all three should decline and this natural tendency had been accelerated by Government action. Private building was from the start virtually stopped, and from April 1940 the amount of materials made available to the manufacturing industries for the home market was by Order severely cut down.³ This in turn reduced the quantity and variety of goods that were passed to distributors for sale to the civilian population. In consequence large redundancies of workers might be expected, and it was the aim of the Government to ensure that those that were withdrawn were of the type that would be most useful to the war effort. The first and most pressing need was the build-up of the Armed Forces and, as successive age groups registered under the National Service Acts, all fit men with few exceptions were immediately called up. In most cases there was no need to replace them and, where substitutes were deemed to be required, employers might hope to find them from among older

¹ See P. Inman, *op. cit.*, Chapter VI (ii).

² See above p. 175.

³ See above p. 130.

men and women. Deferments could thus be most sparingly granted. By midsummer 1941—by which date all men between the ages of twenty and forty had registered under the National Service Acts—the total male labour force in group III had been reduced by not far short of two millions. But large as this contribution was, the ever increasing demands of the Forces and the munitions industries for men and women were to necessitate further inroads upon the labour forces of the three main components of the group—building, the distributive trades and the consumer goods industries.

The building industry had been singled out as the most fruitful source from which men could be obtained for the Forces, and the Prime Minister had issued directions for the reduction of its total labour force in progressive stages.¹ During the first six months of 1942 50,000 men had been withdrawn, but then a crisis occurred and the further call-up of building workers had to be suspended. Under what was known as the Bolero scheme the United Kingdom had undertaken to construct additional airfields and accommodation for American troops stationed in the country. When the programme materialised it greatly exceeded the anticipated scale, and it was clear that its timely execution would place a great strain upon the resources of the building industry. Moreover, as the sites upon which the bases and hutments were to be erected were for the most part in isolated areas, extensive transfers of workers would be involved. To obtain the necessary labour the following measures were taken. All building workers of military age were de-reserved, on the understanding that their call-up would be suspended if they transferred to Government work of the highest priority and, to facilitate this movement, directions were to be freely used by the Ministry of Labour. Most noteworthy was an agreement reached with the building industry, by which to make up the deficiency of labourers, craftsmen could be employed on labouring work on Government contracts. These craftsmen, who were known as 'designated craftsmen', could be used to fill current vacancies or to take the place of labourers who could then be transferred to heavier work for which their normal activities made them more suitable than craftsmen. During the late summer and autumn good progress was made with the Bolero programme, and in November it was possible to resume the call-up of men for the Forces. By the end of the year a further 25,000 workers, most of them craftsmen, had been withdrawn from the industry.

Having lost so many men to the Forces—and the limit had not yet been reached—employers in the distributive trades were in the late months of 1941 asking for an assurance that they would at least be able to keep the women already in their employment and to replace

¹ See above p. 167.

wastage by further engagements. To this proposition, however, the Ministry of Labour felt obliged to make some serious qualifications. With the unsatisfied and still mounting demands of the munitions programme for female labour it had been decided as a matter of general policy to begin to withdraw from the less essential industries all women between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. The distributive trades (with the exception of food stores and shops) must, therefore, be prepared to lose their younger women. It was, however, recognised that the sudden withdrawal of all women between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, following so closely on the call-up of male employees, would cause serious dislocation of business, and that it would be particularly necessary in the case of firms that would be liable to lose large numbers to stagger the rate of releases and to make provision for the temporary retention of some key workers. Accordingly, it was decided to set up a Central Panel composed of representatives of employers and workers in the distributive trades under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour to devise a scheme of orderly releases. This was a successful experiment and negotiations were conducted in an atmosphere of constructive goodwill. Satisfactory criteria were adopted for the identification of key workers in the trades and arrangements made for their retention until satisfactory substitutes had been found. As time went on and the demands of the munitions industries for women grew in volume and urgency, more age classes were brought within the field of withdrawal—at first the twenty-six to thirty age group and then by progressive stages women up to the age of forty-one with safeguards for those occupying pivotal positions. Thus during 1942-43 the distributive trades became fruitful—perhaps the most fruitful—purveyors of female labour and in particular of that rare commodity—the young mobile woman. Nevertheless, by the engagement of school leavers and of older women—many of them on a part-time basis—employers were largely able to recoup their losses.

The consumer goods industries for which the Board of Trade was responsible had for some time been subject to the restrictions of the Limitation of Supplies Orders. As an instrument for providing a pool of labour from which workers might be transferred to employment more directly connected with the war effort, these Orders had, it will be remembered, a serious drawback. They could create a redundancy of labour in the consumer goods industries, but they could not ensure that it would be released in areas where it could be speedily absorbed in munitions or other essential work. On the contrary in some areas the result might be pockets of unemployment. It was among other reasons to counteract this last danger that in the spring of 1941 a concentration scheme—which has already been described¹—was drawn up. At the

¹ See above pp. 146-149.

same time when this control was introduced there were high hopes—which unfortunately were only to be partly realised—that, if the manufacture of consumer goods could be confined to those parts of the country where labour was relatively easy and firms situated in areas studded with munitions factories could be closed down, a substantial number of workers would be made available for transfer where they were most urgently required.

(ii)

More Concentration

By the end of 1941 the concentration of industry covered by the Limitation of Supplies (Miscellaneous) Order had virtually reached its peak, but there were still some other possibilities to be explored. Pressure to do so came very largely from the Ministry of Labour, which believed that, if concentration were extended and if present and future schemes were more firmly administered by the closing down of non-nucleus firms, more labour would be made available than the Ministry could hope to secure by other means. Secondly—and here it had the support of the Ministry of Production—the intolerable congestion of production in ‘scarlet’ areas must be relieved, and this could be best done by removing civilian production to places where labour was more plentiful. In this situation the Board of Trade was ready to try some more concentration and started upon a number of schemes, some of which were carried into operation while others had to be abandoned as impracticable. It also undertook to reconcentrate some of the light industries, with the intention that their production should in future be carried on only in easy labour areas. In addition the Ministry of Food agreed, although without much enthusiasm, to make plans for concentrating some of the food processing industries. Before, then, attempting to assess the value of concentration in terms of manpower, the developments that took place in 1942-43 may be usefully surveyed. As, however, the story has been told in detail in other volumes of this History¹, it will be sufficient to pick out the points with a special bearing upon manpower.

(a) THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Of the new schemes that were introduced by the Board of Trade in 1942 the most ambitious, and the most protracted, was that for the clothing industry.² For a number of reasons it was a difficult industry to concentrate. The two main sections into which it was divided,

¹ See for Board of Trade industries E. L. Hargreaves and M. M. Gowing: *Civil Industry and Trade*, pp. 221-224 and for the food industries R. J. Hammond: *Food*, pp. 322-334.

² See E. L. Hargreaves and M. M. Gowing: *op. cit.*, pp. 400-413.

heavy and light clothing, were virtually separate industries. Their production methods, machinery and materials were different, and there was little interchange of labour between the two. Secondly, the industry contained a very large number of small firms and their interests were quite separate from those of the mass production undertakings. Lastly, the industry was being called upon to satisfy two distinct demands—orders for clothing for the Services that fluctuated in volume and specification with changes in the strategic programme, and the supply of sufficient quantities of outer garments and underwear for the civilian population in accordance with the provisions of the clothes rationing scheme, which had been introduced in June 1941. After nearly two years of discussion a scheme of concentration for the whole industry was worked out. From the manpower point of view it was unlike any previous scheme. Its central feature was the granting to nucleus firms of 'approved labour forces' to cover both their Service and civilian contracts. Within this total withdrawals would only be made if the Ministry of Labour could provide substitutes. Moreover, to encourage firms to move their production out of congested areas the approved labour force of nucleus firms in 'scarlet' areas was divided into two parts—(a) the residual labour force consisting of workers whom the Ministry of Labour could not transfer to war work, and (b) an authorised labour force within which the firm might recruit labour to carry out its production in a 'green' area. Correspondingly, firms in 'green' areas were given an approved labour force consisting of the numbers they were actually employing together with the number of additional workers they might recruit for any production they were undertaking on behalf of a firm in a difficult labour area. Thus, firms in 'scarlet' areas were not completely closed down or obliged to move the whole of their production out of the area. Instead, the Ministry of Labour was to remove all the labour that it could use for more important work. On the same principle non-nucleus firms were not given an approved labour force, but were permitted to continue to run as best they could with such non-directable labour as they could obtain. Coming at a late stage in the history of concentration the scheme provided the Ministry of Labour with considerable numbers of workers in the places where it was most difficult to satisfy the demands of munitions undertakings.

(b) OTHER BOARD OF TRADE INDUSTRIES

No more than a passing mention is necessary of the other new concentration schemes attempted in 1942 by the Board of Trade. Two of them for the lace and jute industries yielded small releases of labour. By contrast, the proposed concentration of wool and paper met with such resistance from within the industries that no effective schemes emerged, and plans for dealing with sections of the iron and steel

industry were equally unsuccessful. In order to release more labour the Board of Trade, however, decided to reconcentrate some of the light industries. Firms in difficult labour areas were informed that their nucleus certificates would not be renewed unless they moved their undertakings to easier labour districts. Encouraged by the success of its efforts, the Board of Trade then decided to impose similar requirements upon some industries which for a variety of reasons had not been yet brought under any concentration scheme. Its choice fell on the hat industry, which was instructed to remove the whole of its production out of Luton. Such a storm of local protests, however, broke out that the Board decided not to proceed any further with its drastic proposal.

This incident brought into the open the divergent views of the Minister of Labour and the President of the Board of Trade on the handling of non-nucleus firms. The former urged that it was essential that they should be closed down because otherwise, as was in fact happening, they were able to attract contracts and labour, and their claim to be allowed to keep their premises and workers could not be resisted without strong protests. The latter was not prepared to accept the responsibility of closing down firms completely and throwing people out of work. He would, however, do all that he could to release labour where it was most required by refusing licences to manufacture unessential goods in difficult areas. In the end a compromise agreement was reached in February 1943. In future, concentration—which, it was suggested, should be carried out by the nomination of nucleus firms—was only to be attempted when a full examination of the situation demonstrated its practicability. Where it appeared to be impracticable to apply concentration, arrangements were instead to be made for the withdrawal of labour on an orderly plan.¹ While this decision may seem in one respect a vindication of the standpoint of the President, it was also an implicit admission that the principles of the White Paper on concentration could no longer be put into operation. The days of concentration were nearing a close.

(c) THE FOOD INDUSTRIES

It was not till the beginning of 1942 that, in response to demands for additional storage space and labour, the Ministry of Food made any real efforts to concentrate any of its industries. This slowness was less due to apathy than to a serious doubt whether concentration, with the dislocation that would be involved, was the best way of effecting such reductions in certain types of food production as might be dictated by economic necessity. Nevertheless, it was prepared to see what could be done and in the first place selected five industries—bacon curing, biscuits, chocolate, soft drinks and starched food powders—

¹ See E. L. Hargreaves and M. M. Gowing: *op. cit.*, p. 222.

from which it believed, although it lacked detailed information, a few thousands of workers might be released for other employment. As the Ministry had accepted responsibility for maintaining a prescribed level of output in each of these five industries, a concentration scheme could not be left to the initiative of individual firms, nor could it be imposed upon the industry without consultation. Arrangements would, it was felt, have to be made through a representative trade association and, where that did not already exist, it would have to be set up. This procedure, however necessary, was hardly calculated to produce quick results. Moreover, other difficulties were to arise. When the scheme for bacon curing was being drawn up, the Ministry of Food invited the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Labour to submit a list of the firms that they would like to see closed down. On the advice of these two departments it then proceeded to close two of the Co-operative Societies' most efficient firms, one in Cheshire and the other at Kilmarnock. This raised a storm of indignation, and the atmosphere was not improved when it was found that only 122 workers had been made available for other employment. Shortly afterwards when the scheme for concentrating chocolates was being prepared, the Ministry of Labour pressed for the closing down of factories in 'scarlet' areas, including most of Bournville's at Birmingham. This was strongly resisted by the Ministry of Food. The production from some of its most efficient firms would be lost, the cost of additional transport would be high, and it would be so much the harder to put back the industry to normal after the war was over. These disadvantages, the Ministry argued, outweighed such releases of labour as might otherwise be realised. The unfortunate result of the long inter-departmental controversy that ensued was to delay the release of much needed labour and, when the scheme for chocolates was finally agreed, the expected number of workers for transfer had been sensibly diminished by voluntary departures. The most complete concentration was that of the soft drinks industry, but it may be doubted whether it repaid the time and energy which was given to it. From the number of small firms involved the useful labour obtained was negligible.

SUMMARY

The chief difficulty in making a just assessment of the amount of labour that was released as a direct result of concentration is the lack of reliable statistics. In August 1941 the Board of Trade estimated that the total labour that would be released from twenty-seven industries that were being concentrated was of the order of 214,000; but this was little more than a wishful speculation. The Ministry of Labour returns show that from October 1941 to March 1943 the labour forces of the industries concerned decreased by only 125,000, and that included substantial losses due to normal wastage and the voluntary departure of

workers. After that date the only Board of Trade industry from which any substantial release of labour was expected as the result of concentration was the clothing industry, and the actual yield from it is not estimated to have exceeded 20,000. It may, therefore, be that the total releases by concentration of the Board of Trade industries amounted to little more than 100,000. When we turn to the food industries, there is a similar discrepancy between the estimates of the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Labour.¹ The former had put the number to be released at 30,000; but the Ministry of Labour statistics show that by March 1943 only about 10,000 had been made available. Later releases from two or three industries from which most was expected were extremely small—some 600 from biscuits and 150 from soft drinks. The numbers, therefore, that were made available through the Board of Trade and Ministry of Food concentration schemes taken together may have been somewhere between 110,000 and 120,000.

The amount of labour obtained from schemes of concentration to which so much time had been devoted was admittedly a disappointment. But perhaps it was not so surprising. The concentration schemes suffered from trying to do too many things at the same time, and too many divergent interests were involved. Lengthy discussions were necessary and weeks, if not months, elapsed between the announcement that an industry was to be concentrated and the application of a scheme to it. Firms got a good idea whether or not they were to be granted nucleus status, and in the latter case workers, rather than await their fate, took action on their own initiative. Thus it was found that, when the time came to start withdrawals, there was much less labour available than had been anticipated. This was to some extent due to bad timing. When most of the concentration schemes were being launched the movement of labour was not as yet under full control. The Control of Engagement Order for women was not made until January 1942. If this had been in operation when concentration began, the results might well have been different. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to leave the impression that concentration conferred no benefits in the manpower field. In a number of industries that were strongly organised, such as hosiery, cotton and pottery, labour was withdrawn on a substantial scale and in an orderly fashion. The workers thus made available were of great assistance to the Ministry of Labour in filling vacancies especially in Royal Ordnance Factories, such as Chorley in Lancashire and Swynnerton in the Pottery area. On the other hand, the wisdom of attempting to concentrate industries in which there was a large number of small firms may well be doubted. The process was complicated and, partly because of this, the yield of labour was disproportionately small. Moreover, the persistent pressure

¹ See R. J. Hammond: *op. cit.*, pp. 332-334.

from the Ministry of Labour to close down non-nucleus firms completely may be thought well-intentioned but ill-judged. When such action was taken or contemplated, it was not infrequently found that there were hardly any workers left who could be usefully employed in making munitions or in doing other essential work. Better results with less heartburning might have been achieved if the decision reached in respect of the clothing industry, by which firms were not to be closed but the Ministry of Labour was to be free to withdraw such labour as it could use, had been taken earlier in the history of concentration.

(iii)

Civil Defence

In addition to the Armed Forces and the munitions industries there had been, especially since 1940, a third competitor for manpower. With first the threat, and then the materialisation, of prolonged and intensive air attacks there had been a pressing need for men and women in the different branches of Civil Defence. By the end of 1941 400,000 were employed full time in one capacity or another on this work and a further one and a quarter millions were undertaking part-time duties. By then, however, the immediate danger was over, and considerable numbers of the full-time personnel were standing by with insufficient duties to occupy them. To pass the time they were trying their hand at toy-making and in their off hours were picking up such occasional jobs as might be available near their different posts. This was not good for their morale and it was also a waste of manpower, which in the general shortage could ill be spared. With the difficulty of forecasting the intentions of the enemy, it was essential on the other hand that in the event of new air attacks the trained members of the Civil Defence Services should be immediately available.

On 26th February 1942 the Home Secretary announced in the House of Commons the broad outlines of the policy which the War Cabinet had decided to adopt.¹ There could, he said, be no wholesale and unconditional release of the whole-time members of the Civil Defence Services, but a great deal could be done to make them available for other work without conflicting with Civil Defence requirements. Provision of work at the depôts was necessarily restricted; the main line of advance must be by releasing workers for approved industrial employment away from their depôts, with the liability for recall at short notice in cases of emergency. Subsequently, it was decided by an inter-departmental committee charged with the detailed administration of this scheme to divide the workers who could be

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 378, Col. 344-5.

released into two classes: (a) those who could be used in any way the Ministry of Labour might think fit with only a nominal obligation for renewed service in the event of air attacks, and (b) those who could be conditionally released for work in their home area while remaining part-time members of their local Defence Units. It was further agreed that men in the first class might be posted to the Armed Forces. In March a registration of all full-time paid members of the Civil Defence General Services, the National Fire Service and the units of the Police Force was held under the Registration for Employment Order, and particulars of the age and previous occupations of the registrants were taken down. On the basis of this analysis the Home Secretary informed the War Cabinet that he was prepared to release for an indefinite period up to one-third of the whole-time strength of the Civil Defence General Services—approximately 55,000, and up to one-sixth of the National Fire Service—about 21,000, and to make available for the Armed Forces some of the young men in the Police Force.

As it would have been inequitable to impose upon all districts the same proportional reductions, it was left to Regional Commissioners and local authorities to work out the number that could be released from the local Civil Defence and Fire Service units, bearing in mind the target which had been set for the country as a whole. These numbers were then sent to the local offices of the Ministry of Labour, which were responsible for selecting, in consultation with the local authorities, the workers that would be most useful for other employment. Inevitably disputes arose—the local authorities being understandably anxious to get rid of the oldest and least efficient members, the Ministry of Labour being equally determined not to be landed with men and women who were incapable of a full day's industrial work. Releases in consequence proceeded at a leisurely pace and despite exhortations the final results, when the scheme was wound up in the early months of 1943, were well below the target of releases that had been set. From the Civil Defence General Services the number, 28,000, placed in employment was only a little more than half of what had been anticipated, while the releases from the National Fire Service only totalled 3,700. In the latter case, however, there was a justifiable excuse. In the course of the summer the enemy had started to use a new type of incendiary bomb, and the fear that this might develop emphasised the prudence of retaining an adequate complement of trained firemen. The contribution from the Police was the most satisfactory. In June the age of reservation of members of the Police Force was raised and, in consequence, some 5,000 were posted to the Armed Forces during the latter half of 1942, while industry benefited to the extent of an additional 2,500, about a third of whom were given preliminary training in Government Training Centres.

(iv)

The Manpower Situation at Mid-Summer 1942

We shall conclude this chapter with a general review of the broad changes in the manpower situation at mid-summer 1942, as revealed by Table 19¹. A number of interesting conclusions emerge. Taking the Fighting Services first, in the first two years of the war there had been an increase of two and three-quarter million men mainly from call-up under the National Service Acts; in the third year the expansion had been limited to just over half a million, because owing to the competing demands of the munitions programme it had been found necessary to set a ceiling to the requirements of the Army, which of the three Services was the most voracious consumer of manpower. The main source from which this additional half million men were drawn was still, as it had been since the outbreak of the war, the less essential industries, but small contributions came from the essential and to a lesser degree the munitions industries, mainly as the result of the progressive raising of the age of reservation. In the Women's Auxiliary Services the story was different. Up to midsummer 1941 their strength, after allowing for wastage, stood at only 105,000, but by the following year it had almost trebled.

Turning to the three groups of industries some striking changes in distribution may be observed. In the last of the three years under review the male labour force of the munitions industries, which by midsummer 1941 had risen by over 500,000, had been expanded by a further 145,000 workers. These for the most part had had to be extracted and transferred from other essential industries—a process which increased in difficulty as the shortage of manpower became more acute. No less remarkable was the addition in the course of three years of nearly 1,200,000 women, more than half of whom had taken up munitions works since midsummer 1941. In the second group of industries the male labour force was reduced by a further 92,000 in the third year of the war—making a total withdrawal since 1939 of 332,000 for the Forces and munitions industries. These losses had, however, been compensated by the intake of women, and there was a net increase in the group of the order of 300,000. In the third group the less essential industries as a whole had in the course of three years lost over 38 per cent. of their men and about 4½ per cent. of their women. Whereas the heaviest withdrawals of men for the Forces had taken place by mid-summer 1941, it was not till the following year that the number of women going out of the industries was greater than the number coming in. This reflected the growing demands of the

¹ For more detailed information see Statistical Appendix, Table I.

Auxiliary Services, the aircraft industry and the Royal Ordnance filling factories.

Looking at the picture over the whole period perhaps the three most striking features are (a) the huge expansion of the Fighting Services, most of which had been accomplished in a matter of two years; (b) the increase, accelerated during the last year under review, of over 2 million women in the munitions and essential industries; and (c) the scale on which the less essential industries had been raided to provide both men and women for the Services and the needs of the production programme. If mid-summer 1942 had been the peak of mobilisation, the country had no cause to be ashamed of the efforts which it had made. But the sacrifices and inconveniences which the civilian population were to be asked to endure had not reached their limits.

Table 19: Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain* 1939-1942

Thousands

	Estimated numbers			Increase (+) or Decrease (-)			
	June 1939	June 1941	June 1942	June '39-June '41		June '41-June '42	
				Number	Percent.	Number	Percent.
(i) MALES AGED 14-64							
Armed Forces	480	3,278	3,784	+2,798	+582.9	+506	+ 15.4
Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Police	80	324	304	+ 244	+305.0	- 20	- 6.2
Industry: Group I	2,600	3,140	3,285	+ 540	+ 20.8	+145	+ 4.6
Group II	4,096	3,856	3,764	- 240	- 5.9	- 92	- 2.4
Group III	6,387	4,524	3,943	-1,863	- 29.2	-581	- 12.8
Total employed in industry	13,083	11,520	10,992	-1,563	- 11.9	-528	- 4.6
Total—Forces, Civil Defence, etc. and industry	13,643	15,122	15,080	+1,479	+ 10.8	- 42	- 0.3
Registered insured unemployed	1,013	100	61	- 913	- 90.1	- 39	- 39.0
Total working population	14,656	15,222	15,141	+ 566	+ 3.9	- 81	- 0.5
(ii) FEMALES AGED 14-59							
Women's Auxiliary Services	—	105	307	+ 105	—	+202	+129.4
Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Police	—	59	80	+ 59	—	+ 21	+ 35.6
Industry: Group I	506	1,100	1,705	+ 594	+117.4	+605	+ 55.0
Group II	587	989	1,220	+ 402	+ 68.5	+231	+ 23.4
Group III	3,744	3,759	3,577	+ 15	+ 0.4	-182	- 4.8
Total employed in industry	4,837	5,848	6,502	+1,011	+ 20.9	+654	+ 11.2
Total—Forces, Civil Defence, etc. and industry	4,837	6,012	6,889	+1,175	+ 24.3	+877	+ 14.6
Registered insured unemployed	257	98	26	- 159	- 61.9	- 72	- 73.5
Total working population	5,094	6,110	6,915†	+1,016	+ 19.9	+805	+ 13.2
(iii) TOTAL: MALES AND FEMALES							
Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services	480	3,383	4,091	+2,903	+604.8	+708	+ 20.9
Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Police	80	383	384	+ 303	+378.8	+ 1	+ 0.3
Industry: Group I	3,106	4,240	4,990	+1,134	+ 36.5	+750	+ 17.7
Group II	4,683	4,845	4,984	+ 162	+ 3.5	+139	+ 2.9
Group III	10,131	8,283	7,520	-1,848	- 18.2	-763	- 9.2
Total employed in industry	17,920	17,368	17,494	- 552	- 3.1	+126	+ 0.7
Total—Forces, Civil Defence etc. and industry	18,480	21,134	21,969	+2,654	+ 14.4	+835	+ 4.0
Registered insured unemployed	1,270	198	87	-1,072	- 84.4	-111	- 56.1
Total working population	19,750	21,332	22,056	+1,582	+ 8.0	+724	+ 3.4

* See notes appended to Table 16.

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

† Including 380,000 women in part-time paid employment at June 1942, two being counted as one unit.

CHAPTER XII

THE PEAK OF MOBILISATION

IN 1943 a new phase in the mobilisation of manpower began. The days in which production requirements had determined the distribution of labour were passed: in future programmes would have to be trimmed to the available supply of workers.

In the middle of December 1942 the War Cabinet had approved an allocation of manpower for the munitions and essential industries to cover the period from July 1942 to December 1943. For the munitions group as a whole the net increase was put at 536,000, divided roughly in the proportion of one to five between the Admiralty and Ministry of Aircraft Production, while the Ministry of Supply was to contract by 78,000: for the essential industries a total increment of 116,000 had been assigned.¹ By the time this decision had been taken one-third of the period for which the allocation had been made was already over, and during these six months all three supply departments had acquired additional labour. Towards its full entitlement the Admiralty was slightly ahead of schedule; the Ministry of Aircraft Production had received over 100,000 more workers, but this represented only about one-fifth of the large allocation it had been given; while the Ministry of Supply, whose production was expanding throughout 1942, was now faced with the task of reducing the numbers employed on its work by no less than 121,000 before the end of 1943.

Table 20: Manpower allocations in the munitions industries—1943

	Estimated labour at July 1942	Allocation up to the end of 1943	Total (i) plus (ii)	Estimated labour at 31st December 1942	Balance of allocation for 1943
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)
Admiralty . . .	815,000	111,000	926,000	854,000	72,000
M.A.P. . . .	1,514,000	503,000	2,017,000	1,623,000	394,000
Ministry of Supply	1,655,000	-78,000	1,577,000	1,698,000	-121,000
Total . . .	3,984,000	536,000	4,520,000	4,175,000	345,000

¹ See above p. 179.

The new situation affected the plans of all three supply departments. Although two of them—the Admiralty and the Ministry of Aircraft Production—could count on increasing their labour forces, the maximum to which they had been authorised to go was well below the numbers they would have liked or believed they required. Both of them, no less than the Ministry of Supply which was due to contract, were thus obliged to adjust their programmes, and the choice of the sacrifices to be made involved difficult and complex considerations. Cuts in different items of production would have to be planned in alignment one with another and in the light of their effect on other parts of the programme. At the same time provision would have to be made for meeting the constantly changing demands of the Forces for new types of weapons and equipment. Moreover, the incidence of such curtailments as were determined upon would have to be regulated, so that the workers would be released in areas where they could be quickly re-employed on sections of the programme which were scheduled for accelerated expansion.

In addition to these general factors the three departments had each their own particular difficulties, and the Ministry of Supply in its rôle of general purveyor of miscellaneous products not only to the Army but to the Forces as a whole was in the least enviable position. That the total labour force employed on its work could be substantially reduced was not in dispute; the problem was selection and timing. Considerable cuts in the rate of production of gun ammunition, mortars and grenades—calculated to release up to 40,000 workers—were agreed within a few weeks of the War Cabinet's December decision. On the other hand, tank production gave trouble throughout the spring of 1943, and an enormous order for jerricans¹ necessitated an expansion of the labour force of engineering firms in several areas where workers were in the shortest supply. It was not, therefore, surprising that plans for revising the programme of equipment for the Army were in April still at the discussion stage.

For the Admiralty the main task was to build up and adjust the capacity of the shipyards. There had been very heavy losses of tankers at sea from submarine attacks. These would have, as far as possible, to be replaced and additional naval escorts would have to be provided, and it was to this work that the additional labour obtained in the earlier months of the year as part of the Admiralty's full entitlement was allocated. Lastly, in the first week of January 1943 the Minister of Aircraft Production, who was now Sir Stafford Cripps, submitted to the Prime Minister a revised and, as he honestly confessed, a more realistic programme of aircraft production. This represented roughly a ten per cent. cut on previous expectations and a projected increase of

¹ The German type of petrol container adopted by the War Office in 1942. See M. M. Postan: *British War Production*, p. 356.

twenty-eight per cent. on the 1942 output. The method by which the new programme had been prepared was to take the actual present production and to ascertain how far with the existing resources of capacity, plant and labour it could be built up. The resulting estimate, the Minister added, was one 'which we ought to insist upon obtaining on the average'. We shall see how far the realisation of this programme was to be dependent upon obtaining the full complement of labour that the War Cabinet had allocated.

MAY SURVEY OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR

As soon as practicable the Ministry of Labour began to take stock of the changes that had taken place in the distribution of manpower during the first half of the eighteen months for which the War Cabinet had made its allocations, and in May it presented its report. Tables 21-23 summarise the achievement and indicate what still remained to be done by the end of the calendar year.

Table 21: Intake into the Forces

Service	Allocation July 1942- December 1943		Intake July 1942- March 1943		Balance of allocation	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Navy . . .	287,000	36,000	130,200	18,900	156,800	17,100
Army . . .	349,000	80,000	296,600	69,000	52,400	11,000
R.A.F. . .	180,000	67,000	145,000	65,500	35,000	1,500
Total . . .	816,000	183,000	571,800	153,400	244,200	29,600

Table 22: Increases in Industry

Industry	Allocation July 1942- December 1943	July 1942-March 1943		Balance of allocation
		Estimated increase required	Increase achieved	
Munitions:				
Admiralty	+111,000	+ 48,000	+60,500	+ 50,500
Ministry of Supply	- 78,000	—	+ 20,500	- 98,500
M.A.P.	+503,000	+ 235,000	+143,800	+359,200
Total	+536,000	—	+224,800 (say)	+311,200 (say)
Other industries and services	116,000	58,000	50,000	66,000
Other industries and services for which no allocation was made	—	—	+130,000	—

Table 23: Total Achievement July 1942 to March 1943

Forces	725,200
Munitions industries	224,800
Other industries and services	50,000
	<hr/>
Total	1,000,000
Other increases	130,000
	<hr/>
Total	1,130,000
	<hr/>

From these statistics and the explanatory note attached to the Ministry of Labour Survey an interesting situation emerged. At the half-way stage the intake into the Forces as a whole was well ahead of schedule. The Army and the Air Force had received over 80 per cent. of their full entitlement and by the end of June they would have obtained their whole allocation. The Navy, on the other hand, had called for less than half of its eighteen months' allocation and would in the second nine months require an intake far in excess of what it had received in any previous year. In the industrial field the Admiralty had achieved over 54 per cent. of its authorised increment of 111,000; by contrast, the net increase in respect of Ministry of Aircraft Production work was nearly 39 per cent. less than the estimated requirement up to March 1943, leaving an impossible balance of 359,200 to be found in the remaining nine months. What was most disquieting was the marked decline in the net monthly increases, which in March 1943 had fallen as low as 3,800. With regard to the labour employed on production for the Ministry of Supply, which was due to contract, there was compared with July 1942 an actual net increase of 20,500. This represented, however, some 22,000 fewer workers than at the end of 1942,¹ and thus the process of reduction towards a minus total of 78,000 had begun. What was most serious was the increase of 130,000 in the manpower of industries and services for which no allocation had been made by the War Cabinet—much the biggest recipient in this group being the Civil Service, which in the nine months under review had expanded by 85,000. If this increase is added to the 50,000 by which those essential industries which had received an allocation had expanded, it will be seen that of the net increase in industry of 404,800, 180,000 was outside the munitions group. In the autumn survey of 1942 the available supply of labour had been placed at 1,600,000, and of this total 1,130,000 or 71 per cent. had been distributed between the Forces and the munitions and other essential industries. This was a notable achievement, but in view of the unsatisfied demand the outlook for the future was less encouraging.

¹ See Table 20.

REVISED ALLOCATIONS OF MANPOWER

When the Ministry of Labour report was presented the Prime Minister was in Washington, and on his return the Manpower Budget for the remaining months of 1943 was in accordance with the War Cabinet's decision in December 1942 due for reconsideration in the light of recent developments. Meanwhile the Service departments had severally reached the conclusion that with the change over from a defensive to an offensive strategy they had under-estimated their requirements, and with the additional demands of Combined Operations and the maintenance of units abroad at fighting strength they could not carry out their commitments with the balance of the total allocation made to them in the previous December. The additional requirements were collectively put at 314,300 men and 59,000 women in the following proportions:

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Navy	33,300	10,000
Army	155,000	29,000
R.A.F.	126,000	20,000

As the new demands had not been formulated at the time when the Ministry of Labour was drawing up its survey, the question arose of the best way of presenting the whole position to the Prime Minister. In accordance with what had almost become a precedent, the Lord President was asked to shoulder this responsibility. On this occasion, however, he set about his task in a somewhat different way. He decided to submit the revised estimates of the Services to the Prime Minister as Minister of Defence without comment. On the industrial side, instead of discussing the Ministry of Labour Survey formally with his Committee, he had informal conversations with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Production and invited the latter to consider with the three supply Ministers the possibility, in the light of the known Service demands, of reducing their claims to more moderate figures.

The results of these consultations were as follows. The Ministry of Aircraft Production was prepared to reduce its additional requirements from 359,200 to 212,000, but that was the limit to which it would go. The Ministry of Supply agreed that its total labour force might be reduced by a further 7,000 to 105,500 in all. On the other side the Admiralty, which had never been satisfied with the cuts in the labour forces of the shipyards, had established a claim for a modest addition of 6,000 workers. In addition it was recommended that essential

industries and services should be given a supplementary allocation of 36,000.¹

With this information the Lord President submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister in which he put the revised total demands of industry at 265,000—a reduction of 112,000 on the previously authorised balance. The revised total demands for the Forces and industry thus amounted to 912,100. To meet these requirements the maximum number available was 414,000, and this figure contained a number of uncertainties. It would involve a further reduction of the less essential industries by 240,000 and the call-up from the building industry, which had many commitments, of an additional 125,000. There was thus a deficit of half a million.

In drawing up his proposals to the War Cabinet for reducing this large deficit to a manageable margin the Prime Minister adopted similar pruning methods to those which he had used in the previous December. He examined the stated requirements of the Forces and industry and assessed the scale on which they should be met in the light of where additional manpower might be expected to make the most effective contribution to the planned offensive. It was almost self-evident, he pointed out, that more value was to be obtained from the fulfilment of the air programme than from such improvements in land and sea dispositions as might be made possible if the strength of the Navy and the Army could be increased. After consultation with his colleagues the Prime Minister reached the following main conclusions. The claims of the Ministry of Aircraft Production for an additional 212,000 workers should be accepted but, as it was improbable that this large increase could be absorbed by the end of the calendar year, the Minister of Labour should do his utmost to find at least 115,000 of this number by that date. To make more labour available for transfer to aircraft manufacture the Ministry of Supply should contract by a further 80,000; Civil Defence by an additional 15,000; and the proposed authorised increase of the essential services should be cut back by 32,000 to a total of 70,000. In view of the special demands of Combined Operations the Navy should be given substantially the numbers it had asked for; on the other hand, the additional demands of the Army and the Air Force should be scaled down to totals only a little above the balance due to them under the allocations made in December 1942.

On 22nd July the War Cabinet agreed the Prime Minister's plan for sharing out the available supply of manpower, which with the addition

¹ This made with the balance of the original allocation 102,000 and allowed for increases in certain other essential industries and services (including National Government service) which at the time of the earlier review were not expected to expand. The total allocation for the group from April 1942 to December 1943 eventually added up to 162,600. See Table 25.

of 15,000 from Civil Defence was assessed at 429,000, and made the allocations shown in Table 24.

LABOUR PRIORITY FOR M.A.P.

Of first importance in this redistribution of manpower was the expansion of the labour force working for the Ministry of Aircraft Production. There were two ways in which the additional 115,000 would have to be obtained—by the transfer of workers from Ministry of Supply production, and by the diversion of young women who would otherwise have gone into the Services to aircraft manufacture. To assist the Minister of Labour in this formidable task the War Cabinet authorised the immediate introduction of the following measures, for which he had asked. Intake into the Women's Services should be reduced to a minimum by stopping volunteering except for some special posts; by suspending the conscription under the National Service Acts of any further age groups; and by appealing to women already accepted for the Services to go into aircraft factories until they were required. At the same time registrations under the Registration for Employment Order should be extended so as to cover all women up to the age of fifty and thereby facilitate the release of younger, and particularly of mobile, women in less essential work by the provision of older substitutes. In order to safeguard the male labour employed on aircraft work no more men should for the time being be called up for the Armed Forces, and the Ministry of Aircraft Production should be relieved of the obligation to return to the Air Force the remainder of

Table 24: Allocations of manpower—April to December 1943

	Balance of allocation at March 1943	Adjustments suggested by the Departments	Adjustments authorised
<i>Services</i>			
Navy	173,900	217,200	190,000
Army	63,400	247,400	145,000
R.A.F.	36,500	182,500	100,000
<i>Industry</i>			
Admiralty	50,500	56,500	50,000
Ministry of Supply	-98,500	-105,500	-185,000
M.A.P.	359,200	212,000	115,000
Other essential industries and services	66,000	102,000	70,000
Total	651,000	912,100	485,000
Supply	—	—	429,000
Deficit	—	—	56,000

the mechanics who had been lent to the aircraft industry. Moreover, the reduction in the labour force working for the Ministry of Supply should be carefully planned so that workers released, who should to the utmost possible extent be mobile, could be re-absorbed in aircraft production. Lastly, regional controllers of the Ministry of Labour should be instructed to make special efforts to fill Ministry of Aircraft Production vacancies and should be furnished by that Ministry with monthly lists of firms whose vacancies must be filled within that period.

By the authorisation of these measures the Ministry of Aircraft Production was placed in a position of unprecedented favour. Not only was it to have the first pick of available labour coming into the market, but it was to be exempted from any contribution to the Armed Forces. As though to emphasise the full knowledge with which this decision had been taken, the War Cabinet finally resolved that, if the supply of labour should prove insufficient to carry out the re-allocations which it had determined, the deficit should not fall on the Ministry of Aircraft Production. The Minister of Labour should report monthly on the progress which he had made in the proposed redistribution of manpower, and the position should be further reviewed, if at any time it seemed unlikely that without additional measures the Ministry of Aircraft Production would achieve the full expansion of 115,000 before the end of 1943.

The Minister of Labour had not concealed from his colleagues his unshaken belief that the Ministry of Aircraft production did not require and could not absorb the large numbers of additional workers it was demanding, nor had he hesitated to utter a warning of the ill effects upon other important production of such a disproportionate allocation of labour. Having failed to win acceptance for his views, he lost no time in putting into operation the decisions of the War Cabinet. Within a week a circular was sent out to the local offices of the Ministry, ordering them when filling vacancies to give an overriding priority to firms engaged on the output of aircraft for the Ministry of Aircraft Production. This instruction, which was issued without reference to the Preference Committee, carried out to the letter what the War Cabinet had authorised, and this literal interpretation of its resolution would appear to have been a piece of deliberate policy. No doubt the Minister hoped that it would put him in a position to demonstrate one of two things: either the Ministry of Aircraft Production would continue to take in all the workers it was offered within its allocation and other vital production would be starved of manpower; or, before the year was out, the Ministry of Aircraft Production would be forced to admit that saturation point had been reached and that it could not absorb the numbers which it had represented as essential to the execution of its programme.

Whatever may have been in the Minister's mind, the reaction to

what he had done was swift and violent. In the first place, the terms in which the circular had been drafted gave super-priority for labour only to production that was actually under the control of the Ministry of Aircraft Production. Ballbearings, tools and tyres for aircraft, because they fell within the authority of the Ministry of Supply, were excluded. If the manufacture of these essential accessories began to lag, as it certainly would, through shortage of labour, then the whole aircraft programme would be thrown out of gear. This oversight in the circular was quickly remedied by administrative action. The second protestant, the Minister of Production, was not, however, so easily placated. He had been disturbed by the decision to give even the most urgent items of production for the Army and Navy only a second claim upon available manpower, and he could not understand—and perhaps the Minister of Labour did not feel called upon to explain—what was the necessity for the rule of thumb interpretation that had been placed upon the War Cabinet's decision. When the matter was brought back to the notice of the War Cabinet, it invited the Lord President, the traditional mediator, to consider whether without disturbing the recent plan of allocation he could in consultation with the other Ministers concerned suggest a way out of the difficulty. His advice was ingenious and conciliatory. Unless, he pointed out, the War Cabinet were prepared to alter its decision, the super-priority which it had accorded to aircraft must stand, but with a slight drafting amendment it would be possible to bring in at the same high level of priority a restricted range of work of great operational urgency for other Government departments. This could be done if, instead of directing the Minister of Labour to ensure that in the event of the supply of labour proving inadequate for the whole plan of allocation 'no deficit should fall on the Ministry of Aircraft Production', the resolution should take the form of instructing him 'to make every effort to avoid a situation' in which a deficit would fall on that Ministry. It was generally felt that this was the best way out of an awkward situation. The War Cabinet, accordingly, agreed that its instructions to the Minister of Labour should be modified in the sense indicated, and that it should henceforth be the task of the Minister of Production to designate as of equal importance with aircraft production such other products or services as he was satisfied were vital to the war programme.

Eligibility for receiving super-priority for labour was thus accorded to two classes of firms: (a) those engaged on the output of aircraft and its components, and (b) those manufacturing other products designated by the Ministry of Production. For the former the grant was automatic, for the latter decisions were reached administratively.¹ The

¹ In practice the products to be included in the designation list were agreed between the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Production and the Director-General of Manpower of the Ministry of Labour.

Ministry of Production sent the list of designated products to the Preference Committee, which then identified the vacancies in particular firms that should qualify for the special treatment. This new procedure remained in force until the end of the year. By that date the Ministry of Aircraft Production had received not merely 115,000—which was the target set for 1943—but 163,500 additional workers. This was as much new labour as it could effectively absorb and aircraft production was, accordingly, removed from the super-priority list.

Thus ended the long controversy between the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Ministry of Labour, and in a sense each side might feel that its point of view had been vindicated. The Ministry of Aircraft Production might claim that, by absorbing in 1943 nearly 50,000 more workers than had been allocated to it for that year, it had proved that without the special measures that had been taken the aircraft industry would have been dangerously short of manpower. The Ministry of Labour, on the other hand, might legitimately point out that the full allocation of 212,000 which the Ministry of Aircraft Production had been granted was well beyond its needs.

Despite the priority for obtaining labour that had been given to the aircraft industry, it is noteworthy, as will be seen from Table 25,

Table 25: Allocations and Achievements—1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943

	Allocated for 9 months April- December 1943	Allocated for full period July 1942- December 1943*	Achievements July 1942- December 1943
<i>Services</i>			
Navy . . .	190,000	350,100	335,800 } 524,700 } 300,800 } 1,161,300
Army . . .	145,000	506,500	
R.A.F. . . .	100,000	303,200	
		1,159,800	
<i>Industry</i>			
Admiralty (Supply) . . .	50,000	110,500	103,500 } -186,200 } 307,300 } 224,600
Ministry of Supply	-185,000	-164,500	
M.A.P. . . .	115,000	258,800	
Other essential industries and services . . .	70,000	162,600†	
Total . . .	485,000	1,527,200	1,513,700

* i.e. Intakes July 1942-March 1943 (see Tables 21 and 22) plus the allocation for April-December 1943 as finally adjusted to take into account inter-Service transfers agreed between the Service Departments.

† See footnote 1 on p. 205.

that most of the other claimants had received substantially, and in the case of the Services more than, their entitlement. The exception was the group of essential industries and services, which were 35,000 short of their full allocation. Although this was a small number, it was a deficit of about one-fifth of the full allocation and gives some indication of the difficulties that lay ahead when, in the closing stages of the war, the replenishment of many of the civilian industries became a crying need.

THE MANPOWER SITUATION IN AUTUMN 1943

With the allocation of manpower settled up to the end of 1943 the War Cabinet issued instructions that the data on which it would have to determine future plans should be collected in time for a decision to be taken before the next budgetary period opened in the new year. As before, the Ministry of Labour Survey, based on the mid-summer count of the insured population, was the most convenient method of marshalling the relevant material. With a view, however, to expediting its submission to the War Cabinet, it was decided that the task of assembling the forward requirements of the different claimants for manpower should be jointly undertaken by the Ministry and the Lord President's Committee. Whereas the former would be responsible for collecting information about the munitions and building industries, the latter would handle all other industrial requirements and would obtain from the Chiefs of Staff's Secretariat a statement of the needs of the Armed Forces and the Nursing Services. This division of functions would, it was felt, obviate, what had hitherto been found necessary, the vetting by the Lord President's Committee of the demands for labour contained in the Ministry's Survey, and the submission of a digest to the War Cabinet in which attention was focused on the salient questions that called for decision. This was the last time that the Lord President's Committee took a part in the handling of the Manpower Budget, and the reason for the change was largely personal. In September 1943 Sir Kingsley Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, died and was succeeded by Sir John Anderson. Rather than burden the new Lord President, Mr. Attlee, with unfamiliar responsibilities, it was decided to ask Sir John Anderson, if his other duties permitted, to continue his interest in manpower problems, which he had so long handled with skill and judgement. Thus, when the Manpower Survey was ready, it was sent direct to the War Cabinet.

Although the Armed Forces continued to expand and did not reach their maximum strength till D-Day, September 1943 was the high-water-mark in the mobilisation of the manpower of the country. The flowing tide was on the turn and from that date until the end of the war the ebb was steady and continuous. In four years the number of men and women employed in the Armed Forces, Civil Defence and

industry had been built up to over 22 millions, a rise of almost three and three-quarter millions, and of this increase nearly two and a half millions were women. The Armed Forces, starting in 1939 with less than half a million men, had reached a strength of over four and a quarter millions, and in the Women's Services, which the war created, some 460,000 women were serving. In the industrial field the munitions industries had expanded by close on two, while the less essential industries and services had declined by over three and a quarter, million workers. At the same time a decrease of 400,000 men in the essential industries had been numerically more than compensated by the addition of three-quarters of a million women.

Such was the achievement; but the war was not yet over. Demands were still pressing, but with fresh supplies of labour drying up how were they to be met? In his covering memorandum to the Survey the Minister of Labour advised his colleagues that the total intake from all sources in 1944 would not suffice to replace ordinary wastage and, even if no men or women were called up for the Forces, there would still be a deficit of 150,000. As it was, the Services were asking for 776,000 more men and women; the supply departments for a net increase in the munitions industries of 174,000, while the demands of the basic industries, such as coal and agriculture, represented a net expansion of 240,000, 'These demands cannot be met. The standards and amenities of the civil population cannot be further reduced. A fresh review must be made of the uses to which the available manpower is to be put'. The Prime Minister accepted the Minister of Labour's assessment. It was no longer, he said in summarising the position, a problem of closing a gap between supply and requirements. Manpower could not be more fully stretched than it actually was. All available men and women had been drawn into the war effort. The peak of mobilisation had been reached.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINE IN OPERATION

THE HIGH-WATER-MARK of the mobilisation of manpower in September 1943 is a convenient point at which to pause in our narrative and give a general picture of the administrative machine that had been built up during the preceding three years. In earlier Chapters we have called attention to the gradual tightening of controls and to new and drastic measures that had from time to time to be improvised to meet the impact of the increasing demands of war upon the dwindling human resources of the country. As the manpower situation, which was never static, grew in complexity, so the machinery for dealing with it had to be expanded, tested and developed. By the summer of 1943 a vast organisation had evolved, stretching from the War Cabinet through intermediate levels to the local offices of the Ministry of Labour. The purpose of this Chapter is to explain how this machine worked, the relation of its parts one to another, and the sources from which it derived its power. After recapitulating the methods by which manpower policy decisions were reached, we shall give a picture of the organisation of the Ministry of Labour at administrative and executive levels, and we shall conclude with an account of the main controls and instruments it was empowered to use.

(i)

Ministerial Machinery

Final decisions on manpower policy rested with the War Cabinet. As one of its members the Minister of Labour could either initiate oral discussions on manpower or submit memoranda setting out the matters on which a decision was required and the measures which, with the acquiescence of his colleagues, he had in mind to take. With the mass of problems with which the War Cabinet had to wrestle it was, however, impossible for it to give the necessary time and attention to detailed manpower proposals. It, accordingly, decided to set up ministerial committees with instructions to examine and, as far as possible, determine production and manpower questions, and to focus in their reports the points on which it was necessary to obtain a Cabinet

decision. In May 1940 the Production Council (which was later succeeded by the Production Executive) was established with the responsibility of translating into terms of munitions the strategic plans approved by the War Cabinet, and of assessing the manpower that would be necessary to carry out the programme. It was this Council that in August 1940 decided, on the recommendation of the Minister of Labour, to appoint a committee under the chairmanship of Sir William Beveridge to investigate the probable volume and incidence of future labour requirements and the possibility of obtaining the necessary workers. The report of this committee, which was the first scientific attempt to draw up a manpower budget, was considered by the Council towards the end of the year and, in view of its detailed contents, it was decided to make a digest of its main findings and to submit this, together with the proposed methods for obtaining the necessary manpower, to the War Cabinet for its approval.¹

At the beginning of 1942 a Minister of Production was appointed to co-ordinate production planning, and he took over most of the functions of the Production Executive which was disbanded. There was at first some controversy on whether the new Minister's powers extended to questions involving the allocation of manpower for the munitions industries. Mr. Bevin was strongly opposed to any encroachment on what he regarded as his exclusive province, and in the end a working agreement was reached. The Minister of Production would be responsible to the War Cabinet for the volume and kinds of munitions that were required by the strategic programme; the Minister of Labour would advise on the possibility of finding the requisite manpower.²

A further important procedure had been initiated in 1941 for the handling of questions of manpower policy. It arose in this way. When the War Office asked for permission to exceed the ceiling within which it had been instructed to limit its further intakes of recruits, the Prime Minister asked Sir John Anderson, the Lord President, in consultation with the responsible Ministers, to examine and advise on this claim. From then onwards the Lord President's Committee, which had been set up in June 1940 as a 'steering' committee for economic affairs, played an increasingly significant part in manpower discussions. It was this Committee to which the Ministry of Labour sent its annual surveys based on the mid-summer exchange of insurance books, and it was this Committee that determined the final shape of the manpower budget which it submitted to the War Cabinet for approval.³ This procedure continued in force until September 1943 when Sir John Anderson was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. From then onwards, in order that advantage might still be taken of his long experience in handling

¹ See above pp. 97-105.

² See above pp. 170-172.

³ See above p. 107.

manpower issues, the Ministry of Labour surveys were submitted direct to the War Cabinet.¹

When the War Cabinet had taken decisions on major questions of manpower policy, it became the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour to carry them into effect. This involved the construction of schemes together with the machinery for putting them into effect and, where the necessary statutory authority did not already exist, the preparation of Bills or Orders for the approval of Parliament. The administrative plans, which grew in number and complexity as demands for manpower persistently mounted, were drawn up—and subsequently supervised—at the headquarters of the Ministry; their execution fell to its regional and local offices. Let us now look at how the Ministry was organised to carry out these responsibilities.

(ii)

The Ministry of Labour

The organisation of the Ministry of Labour at the outbreak of war was substantially the same as it had been during most of the preceding period of peace. The separate departments which it had set up reflected what were its main peace-time responsibilities—employment, unemployment insurance, training and industrial relations. Shortly after the Munich crisis, however, when a drive to obtain volunteers for the Defence Services was about to be launched, a National Service Department was established which, in addition to supervising the arrangements for the campaign, was given the important task of revising and editing the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. In the spring of 1939, when it was decided to introduce conscription in peacetime, a Military Recruiting Department was also set up. These two additions foreshadowed the National Service responsibilities that the Ministry formally assumed when in September 1939 it became the Ministry of Labour and National Service. Such was the administrative organisation. The executive functions of the Ministry had, since its inception in 1917, been largely decentralised. By August 1939 there were twelve divisional offices, each in charge of a Controller who had full control over the local offices in his division. Of these there were in all some 1,600. Half of them were full time offices staffed by officers of the Ministry and carrying out all the functions of an exchange; half were branch offices or merely local agencies in charge of local citizens which, apart from such limited duties as the registration of unemployed persons for benefit, had to refer all other matters to the parent exchange to which they were severally attached.

The following chart gives a picture of the organisation of the Ministry at the outbreak of war:

¹ See above p. 210.

also set up which, under the expert guidance of an experienced statistician, was to become the source of the manpower budgets that later in the war were the basis on which the allocation of labour was discussed and decided.

The next important landmark in the expanding organisation of the Ministry of Labour was August 1941, when a Director-General of Manpower was appointed. This new post was designed to bring under a single control the National Service, the Military Recruiting and Labour Supply Departments of the Ministry with their related problems, and the Director was, under the Permanent Secretary, directly responsible to the Minister for all matters relating to the call-up for the Forces and to the supply of civilian labour. The choice of the first holder of the office—a senior officer of the Ministry—who continued to serve in that capacity for most of the war was a happy one. The Director, who was a man of action, strong-willed and imperturbable in times of crisis, was in close sympathy with the aims of the Minister, and the successful mobilisation of the manpower of the country was the fruit of this co-operative partnership. Under his aegis the decentralisation of powers and functions, which had always been the policy of the Ministry, was extended and accelerated.

The regional offices as they were now called, which since early 1940 had been reduced from twelve to eleven,¹ were the pivot of the Ministry's labour supply organisation. The controllers were given the responsibility of familiarising themselves with the industries in their regions and their manpower requirements, and of taking whatever measures might be necessary within the framework of current headquarters policy to make the most effective use of the quality and quantity of labour at their disposal. But while a controller from his central position could exercise a general supervision over the movement of labour in his region, particular problems of supply and demand tended to be localised and could be more quickly and effectively dealt with by the local office in the area. It was at this level of the Ministry's organisation that the greatest transformation had taken place. Whereas in the pre-war years the local offices had been mainly engaged in grappling with masses of unemployed, they were now called upon to interview thousands of men and women who had been statutorily obliged to register, and to persuade or direct those who seemed suitable to undertake particular jobs. It was an immense undertaking; large numbers of new and inexperienced staff had to be recruited and trained and, what was no less difficult, the old-time managers had to be stimulated to adjust their ideas and methods to a wholly different set of requirements.

¹ The area of the South Eastern Division was incorporated in the area of the Southern Division in January 1940. In July 1940 adjustments were made in the boundaries of the Southern and London Divisions; and in August 1941 the latter was renamed the London and South Eastern Region.

Speaking in May 1941 Mr. Bevin said 'I have tried to humanise the labour exchanges and honestly, I think, with success. I have appointed special people and have tried to create in them the idea that their prime duty as officials is not to pay out relief, but to find a clue in the occupation or the hobby of the men they are interviewing which would lead to the discernment of their capacity for assisting the war effort'.¹

At the beginning of 1942 with the changes introduced in the methods of dealing with applications for deferment of call-up under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, a new type of office was set up within the regional organisation of the Ministry. These were the District Manpower Boards, of which there were forty-four in all. Their main duty was to consider applications for deferment and, where these were refused, to determine whether the applicants should be called up for the Armed Forces or whether, because of their particular qualities or experience, they should be assigned to some more important civilian employment. In these duties the Boards were assisted by labour supply inspectors, and where desirable they could seek the advice of the regional representatives of the supply departments and the Board of Trade. Moreover, as the Manpower Boards and the local offices in their separate capacities might not infrequently be dealing at the same time with labour in the same firm, close co-operation was established between the two so as to ensure that decisions taken about the withdrawal of workers were consistent and equitable.²

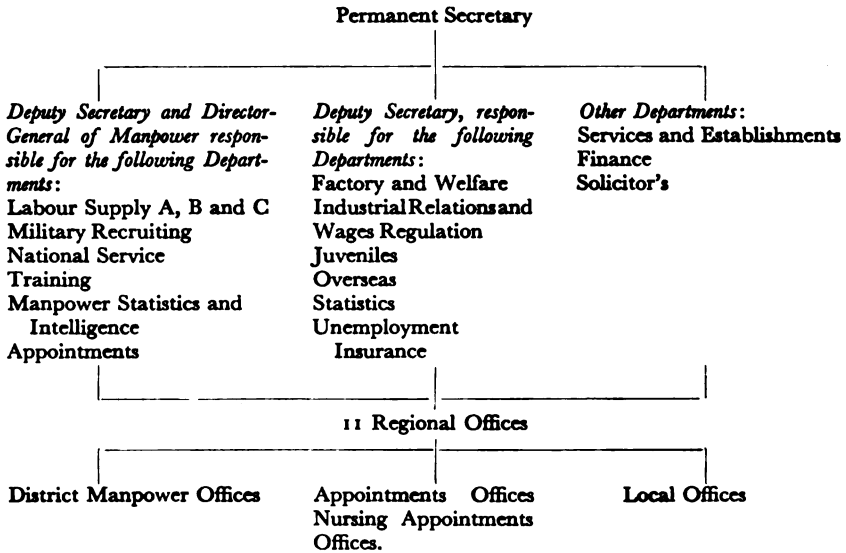
One further expansion of the Ministry's organisation must be noticed. In March 1942 an Appointments Department was established, which comprised the old Central Register of scientists and technicians and a new Appointments Register for applicants with professional, administrative and executive qualifications. Whereas the former continued to function as a single unit centralised in London, the latter carried out its work through Appointments Offices—thirty-one in all—which were set up in the principal towns of the country. After this date, with the exception of the opening of Nursing Appointments Offices in the spring of 1943, there are no significant developments to record.³ The organisation set out in the following chart continued unchanged until the end of the war.

Although the primary responsibility for mobilising manpower fell to the Ministry of Labour, this work could not be carried out in isolation, but had to be closely integrated with the activities of other Ministries. As the supplier of men and women for the Armed Forces and for the munitions and other essential industries, the Ministry had not merely to try to satisfy these major claimants for manpower, but had also to

¹ Speech to Delegates attending the 40th Annual Conference of the Administrative Council: *Printing Federation Bulletin*, May 1941, p. 3.

² See Chapter XVIII.

³ See below pp. 323-324.



withdraw labour wherever it could be spared from employment which was of less direct importance to the war effort. All this involved frequent and prolonged discussions with other departments, and sometimes with employers and trade unions, with hard bargaining on either side. The Ministry, with the knowledge of the limited supplies of labour that were, or could be made, available to meet all requirements, had to scrutinise closely the demands for additional workers submitted or backed by the supply departments for particular items in the production programme, and conversely had to try to convince other Government departments and representatives of the industries concerned that the numbers that it had in mind to withdraw from less important employment were genuinely required and would not cripple the maintenance of essential supplies and services for the civilian population. It was perhaps only natural that supply departments, with the anxiety that shortage of labour should not hold up the output of essential munitions, were wont to pitch their claims too high, and this tendency involved long and at times acrimonious discussions before more realistic figures were mutually accepted.

We shall now give a picture of the machinery for consultation that was set up at the headquarters of the Ministry of Labour and in its provincial organisation.

(iii)

Consultative Machinery

The methods devised for inter-departmental consultations varied according to the nature and magnitude of the problems which had to be determined. Particular aspects of labour redistribution, as for example the unsatisfied requirements of specified R.O.F.s, were reviewed and frequently resolved by the officer in charge of the appropriate labour supply branch and his opposite number in the Ministry of Supply either by correspondence or, where necessary, by a small inter-departmental conference. Where agreement was not forthcoming at this level the matter was referred to higher authority within the respective Ministries and, if subsequent official discussions were abortive, Ministers were asked to adjudicate. The National Service Department had similar relations with the three Service departments, and smooth working arrangements were devised by which registrations under the National Service Acts were timed as far as possible to produce, within the totals approved by the War Cabinet, the numbers that each Service was ready and able to receive.

But over and above such particular and definitive aspects of manpower distribution there were wider and more complex problems, which were of common concern to all Supply Ministries and to each of the Labour Supply Departments in the Ministry of Labour. For the consideration and determination of these major questions of principle and policy an inter-departmental committee, consisting of senior officers of the Ministry of Labour and of the Supply Ministries, was set up in March 1941 under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour. It was called the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. At first it was the official counterpart of the ministerial Production Executive but, when the latter was wound up, it was made responsible on the production aspects of its work to the Minister of Production and on manpower to the Minister of Labour, and to these Ministers it referred any questions which it had either failed to resolve or which it felt were beyond its competence to decide. Its main duties were to conciliate conflicting points of view among the various departments represented on it, and to devise methods for overcoming acute shortages of labour.¹

With the object of ensuring that important projects were not held up by lack of labour, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee delegated to a committee similarly constituted to itself—which was called the Preference Committee—the task of devising a system under which such projects would have first claim on the available supplies of workers.

¹ See above pp. 168 and 170.

To this Committee the supply departments submitted names of undertakings that in their judgement merited special consideration. The Committee discussed these claims and accorded to the undertakings it selected what was called First Preference. This meant that employment exchanges, to which the Committee's decisions were circulated at fortnightly intervals, had to place all suitable labour with First Preference firms in their areas until all their demands had been satisfied.¹ When experience had been gained, changes were introduced by the Committee in its methods of identifying undertakings, and by 1943 only vacancies on products and services which the Ministry of Production, in consultation with the Ministry of Labour, certified as of a particularly urgent character were considered for First Preference.² For other important projects which did not qualify for the highest priority Regional Preference Committees, constituted on the model of the headquarters committee, were authorised to grant what was called Second Preference. This meant in practice that, subject to the filling of First Preference vacancies, the exchanges would recognise these undertakings as having the next claim upon any suitable labour that was still available.

Arrangements for inter-departmental discussions between officials at Regional level broadly followed the headquarters pattern. At the beginning of 1940 the Ministry of Supply had set up Area Boards, on which the other production departments and the Ministry of Labour were represented. When Mr. Bevin became Minister of Labour they were placed under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour divisional controllers,³ and a few months later representatives of employers and workers were added to their membership. The intention was that the Boards should, as far as possible, resolve conflicting priorities arising out of the contracts placed in their areas by the different Ministries. These hopes were not, however, realised largely because the supply departments were not prepared—doubtless for good reasons—to give their regional representatives sufficient information about items in the production programme and the relative importance that attached to them. Consequently, a sense of frustration grew up within the Boards and it was not until they were taken over in May 1941 by the Production Executive and renamed Regional Boards that they gradually came to life. In October of that year they were asked to play an important part in the redistribution of skilled labour and were instructed to set up labour supply sub-committees to assist the Ministry of Labour in meeting local demands. Some of these committees worked very effectively, but in others progress was retarded by the unwillingness or the inability of the representatives of the supply

¹ See above p. 100.

² See above p. 208.

³ See above p. 119.

departments to take decisions without prior consultation of their headquarters. Soon after the Minister of Production was appointed in 1942 an independent enquiry was made into the work and efficiency of the Boards and on its recommendation the authority of the Boards, which were placed under the chairmanship of the regional controllers of the Ministry of Production, was strengthened. From then onwards they became more powerful instruments of administration and in the manpower field did useful service in settling detailed and difficult problems involving the priority of labour in their areas.¹

If the Regional Boards were slow in realising the hopes that had been placed in them as a means of effective inter-departmental consultation, these shortcomings were compensated by the more informal contacts that were successfully established between the regional officers of the Ministry of Labour and those of the Supply Ministries. It was the practice of the Ministry of Labour controllers to hold frequent meetings of labour supply officers from the District Manpower Boards and the employment exchanges, which the district representatives of the Supply Ministries were invited to attend. At these conferences questions of, for example, dilution, labour supply inspection, and the withdrawal of skilled men for transfer to other firms were thrashed out, and while the representatives of the Supply Ministries could voice the grievances of firms producing for them, the officers of the Ministry of Labour were able on their side to explain their policy and their plans. This free exchange of views was of great assistance in reaching equitable decisions and in carrying them into effect.

Mr. Bevin was a strong believer in the value of co-operation between his Ministry and both sides of industry. If employers and workers were told in advance of what was to be required of them, the task of his officers would be made much easier when the time came to put the particular schemes or measures into operation. In accordance with this policy machinery for consultation was set up where and when it was needed at all levels of the Ministry's organisation. A few examples will show the different purposes it served. When it was decided in the autumn of 1941 to withdraw women between the ages of twenty and twenty-five from the distributive trades, a Central Advisory Panel consisting of representatives of employers and workers was set up under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour to give advice on the best methods of obtaining these withdrawals.² Similarly, in many of the industries affected by the concentration of production schemes local joint committees of employers and workers were formed to facilitate the orderly withdrawal of workers from firms that were scheduled for closing. Turning to the munition group of industries—joint committees were set up to agree on the terms of dilution schemes before

¹ See M.M. Postan: *British War Production*, pp. 263-264.

² See above p. 189.

they were introduced in particular undertakings. Furthermore, in July 1941 a panel, on which both sides of the engineering industry were represented, was set up to advise the Ministry on war-time problems, including the transfer of workers.¹ Lastly, the iron and steel industry and the chemical industry provide examples of employers and workers being given a direct share in the actual application of policy. It was decided that each of these industries should be regarded as being within a 'ring fence', inside which workers already in the industry were to be retained, with the intention that its labour requirements could in future be met from its own internal resources. To carry out this scheme local committees of employers and workers, with a representative of the Ministry of Supply, were set up under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour and they were given the responsibility of arranging for transfers of workers from one undertaking to another within the industry and thereby ensuring the best use of its collective resources.²

At the headquarters of the Ministry of Labour there were two bodies to which the Minister turned for advice in the development of his policy. The first was the National Joint Advisory Council with its Consultative Committee, which served as a forum for the discussion of a wide range of manpower questions. The second was the Women's Consultative Committee, to which the Minister put his proposals on all important matters affecting the recruitment and employment of women so that he might have informed advice before reaching final decisions.

(iv)

Instruments of Control

The powers which the Ministry of Labour used for mobilising the manpower of the country derived from the National Service Acts and Defence Regulations, the first and most important of which—58A—was made on 22nd May 1940. The former were the statutory authority by which men and women of specified ages were required to register at the local offices of the Ministry and to present themselves for medical examination, and by which those who were passed fit were issued with enlistment notices. The latter gave the Minister full control over civilian manpower and empowered him to make such Orders as he might decide to be requisite. By 1942 the measures that were necessary for the full mobilisation of the Country had been taken. Men and women, to whom the National Service Acts did not apply, could be required to

¹ *Minister of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946 (Cmd 7225), p. 80.*

² *Ibid:* pp. 69-70.

register, to go to work that had been chosen for them, and over a large part of the industrial field to remain in the jobs to which they had been sent. Let us look a little more closely at the methods by which these powers were put into operation.

(a) REGISTRATIONS

The Registration for Employment Order was made on 15th March 1941. This empowered the Minister of Labour to register men over the call-up age of forty-one and women of eighteen and upwards by their age classes. Public notices were issued of the dates at which the different age classes were required to register at local offices of the Ministry, and registrations for men continued until September 1942 and for women until July 1945. By these dates all age classes up to fifty-one had been covered. The main purpose of the Order was to enable a survey to be made of the available manpower in the country with a view to picking out those who might either enter or be transferred to useful employment. To this end registrants were asked to give particulars of their present employment, and women were invited to provide information about their household responsibilities and, if married or widows, whether they had children of their own under fourteen years of age living with them.¹

(b) DIRECTIONS

The next step after registration was the interview. Men and women were asked to call at the local office where they had registered, those being normally summoned first who were either unemployed or in part-time jobs, followed by those in full employment who were not in reserved occupations or substantially engaged on Government work. If the local office decided that a registrant could fairly be expected to undertake more important work than that on which he was at present employed, he was asked to consider one or two possible jobs selected from a list of vacancies which, in accordance with instructions sent by headquarters, it was of urgent importance to fill. It was always the aim of local offices to make proper use of such skill as a worker possessed and to obtain from him his voluntary acceptance of the job he was offered. Even after it was decided about the middle of 1941 that directions—with the right of appeal to a Local Appeal Board—should be more freely used, the occasions on which their issue was found necessary were relatively few. Most workers who came to the exchanges were prepared to do what they were asked, frequently no doubt because they were aware that, if they did not acquiesce, they could in the last resort be compelled to take the employment that was being offered to them.

¹ See above pp. 143-145.

Directions were also used to effect the transfer of workers within industries. For example, if a labour supply inspector found a redundancy of skilled men in a particular engineering firm and was unable to obtain the voluntary agreement of the management and the workers concerned to their withdrawal, he reported the matter to his regional controller who could then authorise directions to be used. Furthermore, in the building industry labour was frequently directed to work on large-scale projects—which were often in isolated areas—such as the construction of Army camps and hospitals, of airfields and accommodation for the use of the American Forces stationed in Great Britain.¹

The chief value of the power of direction was in the indirect pressure which it could bring to bear. The number of directions actually issued—excluding those used to meet the particular circumstances of the building industry—was in relation to the vast re-deployment of manpower surprisingly small.

Table 27: Directions issued²

	Men			Women	Total Men and Women
	To building and civil engineering	Other directions	Total		
Up to 31st July 1941	574	2,218	2,792	151	2,943
Aug. to Dec. 1941	2,549	7,890	10,439	1,027	11,466
Jan. to June 1942	6,515	10,339	16,854	3,745	20,599
July to Dec. 1942	189,952	22,811	212,763	8,248	221,011
Jan. to June 1943	147,940	25,935	173,875	13,810	187,685
July to Dec. 1943	136,106	29,117	165,223	16,363	181,586
Jan. to June 1944	127,047	48,690	175,737	16,052	191,789
July to Dec. 1944	111,213	54,003	165,216	15,663	180,879
Jan. to June 1945	40,145	36,041	76,186	12,554	88,740
Total	762,041	237,044	999,085	87,613	1,086,698

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

(c) THE ESSENTIAL WORK ORDER

As the object of sending new workers to important industries would be largely defeated if many of them decided to leave the employment to which they had been sent, it was decided in the spring of 1941 to make an Essential Work Order. Under its main provisions undertakings

¹ See above p. 188.

² Directions of men to building and civil engineering are shown separately in the table because of the widespread use of directions in this industry to facilitate the transfer of men to work of first urgency. Directions to women dealt with under the National Service Act and to coalmining 'ballotees' are not included in the table.

which the Minister thought it expedient to designate as essential to the life of the community were entered on a register, and in these scheduled undertakings the movement of workers was severely controlled. As was only to be expected the Order was at first in some quarters unpopular, and there were complaints and protests about the interpretation put upon some of its provisions. When, however, the Ministry had acquired administrative experience of its operation, most of these difficulties were ironed out, and in general the Order came to be accepted by both employers and workers as fair and reasonable because of the advantages that could be set against the imposed restrictions on their normal freedom. While an employer could not dismiss a worker except for serious misconduct without the permission of the National Service officer, a worker was similarly debarred from leaving his employment. Workers had to be regular in attendance and put in the prescribed hours of work, but in return they could count on a guaranteed weekly wage and satisfactory arrangements for their comfort and welfare.¹ The Order thus established mutual obligations between an employer and his workers, and for that reason it was perhaps the most effective and least resented form of compulsion that during the war was imposed upon civilian manpower.²

¹ See above pp. 137-143.

² In order to ensure that workers not covered by the Essential Work Order who left their jobs took up without undue delay fresh employment which it was in the national interest for them to enter, an Order called the Control of Employment (Notice of Termination of Employment) Order (S.R. & O. 1943, No. 1173) was made in August 1943. It required employers to give immediate notice in writing to a local office of the Ministry of terminations in employment of their workers. The Order was, however, ineffective largely because it involved a great mass of paper work at the local offices without compensating results, and it was cancelled immediately the European war was ended.

CHAPTER XIV

MANPOWER PLANNING IN THE LAST PHASES OF THE WAR

THE MANPOWER SITUATION in the autumn of 1943 was complex and disquieting. The major offensive of the war lay still in the future, but already the men and women of the country had been fully absorbed into the war effort. There were no untapped sources of additional supply and the total number employed in industry was beginning to decline. In the coming year normal wastage, it was estimated, would considerably exceed normal intake. At the same time demands for more men and women both for the Services and in some parts of the industrial field were continuing to rise. The only way in which the problem could be resolved was by a redistribution of the existing resources. Some sectors of the war effort would have to be pared so as to supply the needs of others. The question to be decided was which, and to what extent. One thing was clear; if the Army was to develop its full striking force, its effective strength must be unimpaired. Industry must, therefore, bear the brunt of the losses. But the civilian industries had already been drastically cut and little more could be squeezed out of them. It was, therefore, from the munitions industries that most of the additional workers required must somehow be withdrawn, but before this could be safely done it would be necessary for the planners to know for how long and in what volume the supply of munitions must be maintained. An answer to this conundrum was in turn dependent upon the date at which it might be assumed that the European war would be over. If the hypothesis was the end of 1944, then it would be possible to cut back on supplies that would not actually be needed in the preceding twelve months. If on the other hand it was anticipated that the war would go on into 1945 or even longer, then a gradual curtailment of effort in all sectors of the war programme would be inevitable.

On either assumption American aid was indispensable. If the European war was timed to end in 1944, equipment for the British Army would be the main requisite; if German resistance continued beyond that date, additional American contingents would be needed to make good the declining strength of the British Armed Forces. The issue came to a head in November 1943, and at a meeting of Ministers under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister on the 5th of the month it was decided to plan on the assumption of the earlier of the two endings for

the war. For the preparation of a scheme for the reallocation of manpower two committees, one of Ministers and the other of officials, were set up to work in co-operation with each other. The first, whose members were the Ministers of Labour and Production and the Paymaster-General with Sir John Anderson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the chair, was given the task of defining the broad principles that should govern reallocation of manpower; the second, which was composed of representatives of the three Service departments, the Ministry of Labour, and the Offices of the War Cabinet under the chairmanship of a senior official of the Ministry of Production, was to collect data and present detailed proposals to the Ministerial Committee.

The official committee worked fast and before the end of the month submitted to the Ministerial Committee its proposals for reallocation. The following were the chief points in its report. During 1944 the total manpower in industry would decrease by 150,000. The Forces required 274,000—240,000 of them men and the remainder women—and 70 per cent. of this total would have to be found in the first six months of the year. Some services and industries in Group II had already run down too far and must be built up again. Of these the most important were the Merchant Service, transport and the coal-mining industry, and they were to be chief beneficiaries in the total allocation of 110,000 proposed for the group. These increases would have to be provided by reductions in three sectors of the economy. Civil Defence should be cut by 50,000. In Group III a small allocation should be allowed for some civilian industries, such as cotton and footwear and for the hospital services—say 25,000 in all—but in the group as a whole, despite the deprivations it had already suffered, a further net decrease of 138,000 must be obtained. The remainder would have to come from the munitions industries in the proportion of 20,000 from the Admiralty, 211,000 from the Ministry of Supply, 105,000 from the Ministry of Aircraft Production and 10,000 from other departments—a total decrease of 346,000. For the Women's Services volunteering should be opened to girls between the ages of 17½ and 19.

The Ministerial Committee made some minor modifications in these proposals and on 1st December the War Cabinet accepted the general plan of reallocation. Apart from fixing quotas for the Merchant Service, transport and coalmining it did not at this stage attempt to particularise the other industries in Group II and Group III that should receive or give up manpower. It left these details to be worked out by officials under the supervision of the Ministerial Committee, and asked that a further report of progress should be ready for its consideration in May 1944. The proposals when amended to take account of the manpower position at the end of the year were as follows:

	<i>Proposed Intake</i>		<i>Proposed Reductions</i>
Armed Forces	+ 288,000	Civil Defence	— 50,000
Group II industries and services	+ 123,000	Munitions industries	
Group III indus- tries and services	+ 40,000	Admiralty — 13,000	} — 312,000
		M. of	
		Supply — 220,000	
		M.A.P. — 69,000	
		Other Govt. depts. — 10,000	
		Group III industries and services	— 197,000

With the acceptance of the 31st December 1944 as the assumed date at which fighting in Europe would be over, it became necessary to prepare some form of manpower plan for the period following the end of the German war, when it might be anticipated that Japan would be the sole remaining enemy. For convenience this period, whose length could not at first be guessed, came to be known as Stage II. The problem had two related aspects. First, to what extent could the size of the Armed Forces and the volume of munitions for their maintenance be cut back for the more limited requirements of a Far Eastern war? Secondly, how much manpower could be spared for the beginning of the reconstruction of the Home Front and for the resuscitation of the export trade? As early as July 1943 the Joint War Production Staff of the Ministry of Production had the matter on its agenda, and in November 1943 a Minister of Reconstruction, Lord Woolton, was appointed, whose office was to provide a home for Stage II and post-war planning activities. Compared with the more immediate question of manpower allocation for the European war, the requirements of Stage II were closely bound up with long term strategy and called for somewhat different handling. This was reflected in the administrative arrangements that were made. Whereas the committee of four Ministers was given the task of reviewing the decisions reached by the War Cabinet on 1st December 1943 and for suggesting modifications in the light of progress made and of changes in the strategic situation, for Stage II the Minister of Reconstruction was made responsible for assembling and focusing the contributions made by the Chiefs of Staff for the Forces, the J.W.P.S. for munitions, and the Ministry of Labour for civilian industries.

Although manpower plans for the remaining months of the German war and for the subsequent fighting against Japan were component parts of a single comprehensive scheme, it will be convenient to treat them separately down to the late autumn of 1944, when an attempt was made by the Ministry of Labour in its autumn survey to budget for both Stage I and Stage II. Independently of these discussions a group

of officials was also examining the best method of securing an orderly release of men and women from the Services during the interim period between the ends of the two wars, and its recommendations were embodied in a White Paper which was issued in the autumn of 1944. As, however, the proposed arrangements for partial releases after the end of the European war became the basis on which complete demobilisation was carried out when all hostilities had ceased, we shall defer consideration of them to a later chapter.¹ Meanwhile we shall carry on the story of the allocation of manpower for the remainder of the European war and follow this with a description of the attempts made to adjudicate between the claims of the military and civilian fronts at Stage II. The Chapter will conclude with the last manpower budget of the war.

Manpower Allocations—Stage I

The task of allocating in detail the global amounts of labour approved for Group II and Group III industries, which the War Cabinet had, as we have seen, left to the supervision of the Ministerial Committee, was assigned to officials in the War Cabinet Offices assisted by the statisticians of the Ministry of Labour. By negotiation the Civil departments were persuaded into accepting a range of cuts in their new requirements, and the balances were then totalled up on paper. But it was soon recognised that it was quite impracticable to forecast how the reductions and increases would work out in the second half of 1944, and it was accordingly decided to suspend final judgement on Group III industries until the May review of the whole manpower situation, for which the War Cabinet had asked. Meanwhile the Ministry of Labour kept a constant watch on developments and early in May it presented to a Working Party of officials in the Cabinet Offices an appreciation of the changes that had taken place during the first quarter of the year and the prospect of fulfilling the allocations made by the War Cabinet in December 1943. The Working Party held a number of informal meetings, and in the middle of June its findings and recommendations were submitted to the Prime Minister through the Secretary of the Cabinet.

The situation brought to light in the report was disturbing. The manpower programme was not going according to plan and the chief reasons were as follows. As a result of increased demands for supplies largely due to the heavy fighting the Ministry of Supply labour force was decreasing much less rapidly than was expected, and by the end of 1944 it might have fallen by only 70,000 instead of 220,000. Secondly, among the industries in Group III, those scheduled for decrease had

¹ See Chapter XVI.

not yielded up anything like as much labour as was required, whereas those due to increase were not expanding to the anticipated extent. Thirdly, the decline in the total industrial manpower—representing the extent of wastage over intake—had been underestimated and might turn out to be 25,000 above the assessed decrease of 150,000. Taken together these factors involved a substantial unbalance of manpower and the gap between supply and demand was of the order of 225,000. The allocations to the Armed Forces in the first half of 1944—and this was the most encouraging feature—were likely to be achieved, but the provisional intakes for the second half of the year, although they might be met by the existing call-up arrangements for men and by the continuance of volunteering for women between the ages of 17½ and 19, would have to be at the expense of the munitions industries. Moreover, the present allocation for the Army, even if it were forthcoming, would on the estimated scale of casualties be insufficient to prevent a serious decline in its effective strength by the end of 1944. This was, of course, implicit in the allocations made in December 1943 which had assumed a maximum impact upon the enemy in 1944, but with the increased War Office demands based on recent experience of heavy fighting, might it not be prudent, the report suggested, to revise this plan and to assume that the war in Europe would continue till the middle of 1945?

The Prime Minister asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reassemble his Ministerial Committee and consider the new facts which the Working Party's report had brought to light, with the following points in mind. In preparing for the War Cabinet a revised scheme of allocations the Committee should base its plans on the assumption that fighting in Europe would continue throughout the first half of 1945. As, however, the situation might be clearer in August 1944, only temporary adjustments should be proposed. Provision should be made for an increased intake into the Army during July and August of, say, 15,000 instead of 4,000 in each month. On the other hand, the Ministry of Supply should be required to conform with the reduction of 220,000 originally approved, and the resulting shortage of labour amounting to about 100,000 should be shared between the munitions labour forces of the Admiralty and M.A.P., and Civil Defence.

On 6th July 1944 the Ministerial Committee presented to the War Cabinet what was in effect an interim report. It recommended that for the Army in July and August the intake should be 50,000 and should be obtained in three ways. Of the 38,000 due to be called up for the Armed Forces under existing arrangements 32,300 should be posted to the Army; a further 6,000 should be called up from the R.A.F. deferred list, and the remainder should be provided by the transfer of serving men from the Navy and the Air Force. Thus the increase of the Army was to an appreciable extent to be found by

reductions in the actual and potential strength of the other two Services. For the Women's Auxiliary Services the Committee proposed that an additional 4,000 should be allocated during July and August. These would come from volunteers between the ages of 17½ and 19 and, although some of them would already be in employment, their withdrawal would not, it was felt, cause any undue disturbance of existing arrangements. With regard to the labour that particular industries should give up or receive during the remaining months of 1944 the Committee confined itself to making provisional assessments. These would be reviewed towards the end of August and a further report would then be submitted to the War Cabinet. Meanwhile the departments concerned should study the implications of the proposed allocations and make every effort to work to the suggested figures. The War Cabinet accepted the Ministerial Committee's proposals for the Services and agreed to postpone further discussion until the promised later review was ready. Subsequently, it was decided that, for the purpose of manpower planning, departments should estimate their requirements for the second six months of the year on the assumption that the war with Germany would not continue beyond the end of June 1945, and Service Ministers and the Minister of Production were invited to make their estimates on this basis.

On 1st September 1944 the Ministerial Committee submitted its considered views on revised allocations for manpower for 1944. It recommended that the intakes to the Services during the last four months of the year should be fixed at 59,000 men—50,000 of them for the Army—and 8,400 women for the Women's Auxiliary Services. In the allocations for industry some substantial changes were made as compared with the earlier prescription. The munitions industries were to be cut by an additional 111,000 but, whereas previously the Ministry of Supply was to bear the major loss, now the highest contribution was to come from the Ministry of Aircraft Production. In the civilian industries and services in Group III the prospect of getting the numbers originally budgeted for was so remote that the net decrease to be achieved was reduced by about 80,000. At the same time the increase originally allocated for Group II was cut back by 50,000 and Group III was left with a microscopic assignment of 31,000, half of which was to go to the hospitals. Table 28 shows the changes recommended.

These new proposals reflected, of course, the developments in the strategic situation. Whereas in the earlier years of the war the Navy and the Air Force had saved the country from invasion and made possible the change from defensive to offensive warfare, with the successful launching of the assault on the Continent the land forces became the instruments of final victory. The heavy fighting which followed D-Day had demonstrated that the demands of the Army for men and munitions had been in 1943 too severely cut. Consequently,

in the September plan for intake into the Services the Army was to be the major beneficiary, and its strength was to be further increased by transfers from the Navy and the Air Force. Secondly, while to find personnel for the Army and some essential industries the munitions industries as a whole would have to release more workers, the Ministry of Supply, as the purveyor of supplies for the Army, was to be required to give up 50,000 less than the original allocation; the balance was to come from the Admiralty and the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

The forecasts made in December 1943 of where manpower would be most required had been to some extent falsified, but it may be doubted whether at the time they were made the implications of future events could have been more accurately gauged. It is rather a matter of surprise that with the vast numbers engaged on the war effort the margin of error was so relatively small. Where the predictions had gone most astray was in the field of civilian industry. The amount of labour that could still be got from the less essential industries had been, it is true,

Table 28 : Allocations of manpower—1944

	Estimated allocations September 1944			Original allocations December 1943		
Armed Forces Civil Defence	332,000		— 50,000	289,000		— 50,000
Munitions industries— Admiralty Ministry of Supply M.A.P. Other Govt. depts.		— 68,000 — 170,000 — 198,000 + 13,000	— 423,000		— 13,000 — 220,000 — 69,000 — 10,000	— 312,000
Group II industries and services	+ 75,000			+ 123,000		
Group III industries and services		+ 31,000 — 95,000	— 64,000	+ 49,000 — 197,000		— 148,000
Decline in industrial labour force	+ 175,000			+ 150,000		
Intake into the Forces from the unoccupied			— 42,000			— 42,000
	+ 582,000		— 579,000	+ 562,000		— 552,000
Deficit		3,000			10,000	

overestimated. But here too there were extenuating circumstances. The system of allocation of labour in global numbers, which worked satisfactorily for the munitions industries, was not well suited to their civilian counterparts. Firms in the munitions industries were engaged on output for the war, and their manpower requirements could be ascertained and checked by the department for which they were working. By contrast, the heterogeneous mass of civilian industries was much less tightly controlled, and it was difficult for the Government departments most interested in their manufactures to have accurate information of the numbers they were employing, or, still less, whether and to what extent they either urgently needed more labour or could without disastrous results be required to give up more workers. Moreover, without the incentive of high earnings and that sense of importance which attached itself to munitions jobs it was hardly to be expected that workers would readily move in accordance with the prescribed pattern of re-deployment. No doubt the planners in December 1943 were aware that they were banking upon uncertainties. Their mistaken optimism was a reflection of the straits to which they were driven to find any more workers who were not already fully absorbed in the war machine.

Four days after the September report of the Ministerial Committee had been presented to the War Cabinet, the date at which the German war would end was once again brought forward to 31st December 1944. This decision was, however, too late to have much effect on the allocations of manpower for the remaining months of the year. These had already been cut to the bone by the planners, and even the relatively generous allowance of new recruits for the Army could be justified on the grounds that more young men would be needed to accelerate the release of older men who had had long service in the Forces.

The extent to which the allocations made in September 1944 had been realised by the end of the calendar year may be seen from Table 29.

(ii)

Manpower Allocations—Stage II

The changing assumptions that were made about the date at which the German war would end seriously affected the course of deliberations on manpower for the period when Japan would be the sole adversary. As the end of the war in Europe seemed to approach or recede, so did the sense of urgency which attached to Stage II discussions become stronger or weaker. Moreover, without some authoritative guidance not only on the date at which Stage II might be assumed to start but also on the probable duration of the Japanese war,

it was difficult to formulate any realistic plans for the allocation of manpower between the Armed Forces and civilian industry. But although, in fact, it was not till a few weeks before V.E. Day that the War Cabinet finally decided that the second half of 1945 should be deemed to be the beginning of Stage II, various attempts were in the meantime made to visualise the manpower situation after the fighting in Europe had ended. To these we may now turn our attention.

The first in the field with proposals was the Joint War Production Staff, which, on the basis of a provisional estimate by the Chiefs of Staff of the manpower the Services would require for the Japanese war one year after the defeat of Germany, had worked out corresponding figures for the amount of labour that would be required by the ship-building and munitions industries. The conclusions, which were based on the assumption that the Japanese war would go on for three years, were that a total of three and a half millions for the Forces and of three millions for munitions would be required—or in other words that seventy-five per cent. of the manpower employed at the end of 1944 on the double war would still be needed for the first year's prosecution of the single war against Japan alone. This seemed a very high commitment of manpower for a war in which the opportunities of engaging the enemy were necessarily limited by geographical considerations, and in presenting the report to his colleagues the Minister of Production left no doubt that in his opinion the country could neither afford nor sustain the proposed scale of effort. After making some arbitrary assumptions of the numbers that would have to be released from the Forces for work of reconstruction on the civilian front, he suggested that the War Cabinet should cut back by one million the

Table 29 : Allocations and Achievements—January to December 1944

	Allocations September 1944	Achievements
Armed Forces	332,000	359,000
Civil Defence	— 50,000	— 83,000
Munitions industries		
Admiralty (Supply)	— 68,000	— 68,000
Ministry of Supply	—170,000	—138,000
M.A.P.	—198,000	—297,000
Other Govt. depts.	+ 13,000	+ 94,000
Group II industries and services*	+ 75,000 (68,000)	+ 30,000
Group III industries and services†	— 64,000 (71,000)	— 70,000

* and † The total shown for Group II in the achievements column excludes food, drink and tobacco, while the total shown for Group III includes them. In the allocations column the war-time classification of these items within Group II has been retained, but the figures in brackets make the adjustment necessary for a true comparison to be made.

numbers which the J.W.P.S. had estimated would be required for the prosecution of the Japanese war. Meanwhile the Ministries of Labour and Reconstruction had been collecting material for a national manpower budget for the year 1945, which was at the time equated with the first twelve months of Stage II.

The intrusion of the Ministry of Production into the manpower field—which brought back memories of a similar incursion earlier in the war—was not allowed to pass unchallenged by the Minister of Labour. He wrote a strong letter to his colleague in which he questioned the competence of the J.W.P.S. to carry out the investigations that it had attempted, criticised the arbitrary assumptions made by the Minister of Production in his covering memorandum, and deprecated the proposal that the War Cabinet should be invited to reach conclusions on the basis of a set of global figures of doubtful validity. To avoid unnecessary controversy, would not the Minister of Production withdraw his Paper? In this plea Mr. Bevin was unsuccessful, but when the matter came to the War Cabinet on 13th April it reached what was apparently an acceptable compromise. It invited the Chiefs of Staff and the J.W.P.S. to propose revised estimates for the strength of the Services and the munitions industries on the assumption that the Japanese war would last for two, and not for three, years after the defeat of Germany, and taking into full account the effect of geographical limitations upon the deployment of forces against Japan. It further agreed that the Ministers of Labour and Reconstruction, in consultation with other Ministers concerned, should together review the extent to which essential civilian requirements would make demands on manpower in the first year after the defeat of Germany, and it took note that the Minister of Labour was preparing a manpower budget for that period. When these enquiries had been completed the situation could then be further reviewed. But although the preparatory responsibilities had been duly delegated, the road to action was far from clear. There were three questions to which no immediate answer was likely to be found. What aid in the shape of munitions of war would be available from North America at Stage II? What would be the extent of Lend-Lease in civilian goods, and how far could reconversion at home go on, while allied forces were still fighting together in the Far East?

The reports for which the War Cabinet had asked were all ready early in July. The Chiefs of Staff produced a plan for the Services, the J.W.P.S. cut and restated its earlier proposals for munitions, and the Ministers of Labour and Reconstruction put in an estimate of civilian requirements. When the addition sum had been done, it was found that, even on the most favourable assumption of continued help from America and Canada, there was between supply and demand a gap of no less than one and three-quarter millions of men and women. It

was clearly hopeless to try and make proportionate reductions in the different items. What was wanted was some authoritative guidance on priorities, and this the Prime Minister on 3rd August provided. After reviewing the main considerations of Pacific and Far Eastern strategy, he suggested substantial retrenchments in forces and materials at various points, which were calculated to make a saving of over a million men and women. He further proposed that, since it was manifest that the manpower in the civilian sector could not be divided without certain assumptions being made about the relative values of the main reconversion objectives, the restoration of the export trade should come first on the list, and that the provisional scheme for the first year's building programme after the end of the German war must be accepted in full. Other civilian needs could then receive their labour allocations, subject to these overriding requirements.

It now seemed possible that planning for Stage II might continue with some hope of useful results, although progress would no doubt be slow and tentative until the discussions with America and Canada, which were due to take place in the autumn, yielded some positive information about the extent of continued aid. The Ministry of Labour's annual survey would also be soon available. The first draft, which was ready in October, was based on the supposition that 1945 would be the first year of Stage II, and in it all the provisional estimates of manpower had been brought together. But the end of the European war was further off than had been supposed and, before the survey was finally presented to Ministers in December, its practical proposals had had, as we shall see, to be recast on much less optimistic assumptions.

(iii)

The Final Manpower Budget of the War

Amid the changing fortunes of the last stages of the war manpower planning became more complex and intractable, and it is not surprising that the machinery got a bit out of gear. With the uncertainty of when fighting would end and with constantly changing estimates of what each branch of the Services would in the meantime require, attempts to allocate manpower tended to become out of date almost as soon as they were made. Nevertheless, although the story is somewhat involved, it is worth while telling in some detail, because it shows the quickening tempo at which the Government and its advisers were obliged to work.

The doubts and false hopes of the later months of 1944 delayed the presentation of the Ministry of Labour's autumn survey. As we have seen, it was originally planned to provide material for a budget to cover the first year of Stage II, which it was assumed would start at the

beginning of 1945. But when the report finally reached the War Cabinet early in December, it was based on the frank recognition that it was useless to treat the first half of 1945 as anything but a period of continuing hostilities in Europe. In his covering note the Minister of Labour reviewed the changes in the distribution of manpower that might be anticipated in the coming six months. Under existing arrangements about 120,000 men and 10,000 women might be found for the Armed Forces, and this total might be raised by a further 20,000, if there was a vigorous comb out of fit young men employed in the munitions industries. Even so, owing to casualties and wastage the strength of the Forces would probably by June 1945 have declined by 50,000. Civil Defence could be cut by 94,000, and on the industrial front it might be possible, if proposals to be presented for a revised aircraft programme were accepted, to reduce the numbers employed in Group I by about 650,000, of whom 612,000 would come from the main munitions industries. But with a net decrease in the working population of 330,000 and the probability that some temporary unemployment would occur in the course of the release of large numbers from munitions, it was unlikely that the manpower of the civilian industries could be increased by more than 400,000. On these suppositions the changes in the manpower situation during the first six months of 1945 might work out as follows:

	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
Forces (intake 150,000; losses, say 200,000)		
net change . . . . .	.	— 50,000
Civil Defence . . . . .	.	— 94,000
Industry—		
Group I, Supply departments . . . . .	.	—653,000
Group I, Export and Home Market . . . . .	.
Groups II and III	}	+400,000
Increase in unemployment	+ 67,000	
Total	+467,000	—797,000
Net change in working population . . . . .	.	—330,000

For the remaining six months of the year the survey did no more than give a provisional sketch of what might happen. It was quite impracticable to suggest firm allocations of manpower until the outcome of the spring campaign was known.

The Prime Minister dealt with this survey in much the same way as he had handled the May review. He asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reassemble his committee of four Ministers and, on the assumption that the war would end about the 30th June 1945, to prepare for the War Cabinet proposals for allocation of manpower to the

Services and industry. In particular, although a decision must rest with the War Cabinet itself, it should focus the issue that would arise, if to meet the Army's difficulties transfers from the Navy and the Air Force were to be made on a considerable scale.

With this directive the Committee decided to concentrate first on the needs of the Forces and invited the help of the three Service Ministers. On 19th December it submitted its proposals. Dealing first with new intakes it recommended that the call-up of men should include 20,000 young men to be released from the munitions industries. This would give a total of 140,000, of which the Army should receive 120,000 and the Navy the remainder. With regard to women, if the present upper age limit of nineteen on volunteering was removed, the numbers coming forward might be increased by 5,000 to a total of 15,000, as compared with 10,000 in the Ministry of Labour's survey. Of these it suggested 12,000 should be assigned to the A.T.S. and 3,000 to the W.R.N.S. With regard to transfers that might be made from the Navy and the Air Force to the Army, the Secretary of State for War had asked for 70,000 basically trained men, whereas the offers made by the First Lord and the Secretary of State for Air had respectively been the loan of some 11,860 marines in formed units and 5,000 from the Royal Air Force Regiment—most of whom would be likely to be of a low medical category—together with 2,000 aircrew who would not become available until the second quarter of the year. The Committee considered that, while it would not be possible to effect transfers on the scale desired by the Secretary of State for War, the contributions proposed by the other two Service Ministers were too small. It, accordingly, recommended that the Navy and the R.A.F. should each transfer 20,000 men mainly of high medical category—the contingent from the former to include the 11,860 marines. If these recommendations were accepted, then the allocations against the requirements would be as follows:

	<i>Requirements</i>			<i>Allocations</i>		
	<i>New intake</i>	<i>Transfer</i>	<i>Net position</i>	<i>New intake</i>	<i>Transfer</i>	<i>Net position</i>
Navy . . .	27,000	-11,868	+ 15,132	20,000	-20,000	nil
Army . . .	181,500	+70,000	+251,500	120,000	+40,000	+160,000
R.A.F. . . .	nil	- 7,000	- 7,000	nil	-20,000	- 20,000

On the following day, the 20th December 1944, the Ministerial Committee submitted an interim report on manpower for the munitions industries. The Committee pointed out that in arriving at its proposals for intakes into the Armed Forces it had accepted the

estimates made by the J.W.P.S. which were included in the Ministry of Labour survey. They were as follows:

	<i>Estimated labour force required Mid-1945</i>	<i>Reduction or increase over end of 1944</i>
Admiralty	860,000	+ 10,000
Ministry of Supply	1,200,000	— 99,000
M.A.P.	1,100,000	—523,000

The Supply Ministers, however, now stated that these figures would have to be revised. Whereas the First Lord would not now require the additional 10,000 allocated to him, the Minister of Supply, with the possible need that might arise for more shells in the third quarter of the year, had raised his estimated manpower requirements by 50,000, and the Minister of Aircraft Production maintained that to carry out the aircraft programme on which he was working he could only release 400,000 workers in the first half of the year. Thus the net releases from the munitions industries would be only 449,000 as against the 612,000 used by the Committee as the basis of its proposals for intakes to the Services. As the dominating factor in the situation was the size of the cut to be made in the Ministry of Aircraft Production labour force, the Committee recommended that the Secretary of State for Air and the Minister of Aircraft Production should be asked to submit a revised aircraft programme.

The proposals in these two memoranda were accepted by the War Cabinet, and a month later the new aircraft programme was presented and approved. But the hopes that this would ease the problems of manpower allocation were rudely shattered. The Minister of Aircraft Production estimated that to carry out the programme he would need an additional 100,000 workers and, to make matters worse, the Admiralty put in a claim for an increase of 5,000 in their industrial labour force. If these demands were to be satisfied, not only would the Ministry of Labour be unable to meet in full the intake to the Armed Forces,¹ but the already inadequate supply of labour that was provisionally allocated for essential civilian industry would have to be severely cut back. The implications were so serious that on 12th February the Ministerial Committee asked the War Cabinet to reconsider the whole situation including the strategic aspects that were involved.

Once again the Prime Minister issued a directive. First priority must, he said, continue to be given to what was required to achieve the defeat of Germany at the earliest possible date, but after that every effort must be made to meet the essential requirements for a reasonable

¹ Because they would not be able to call up the full complement of 20,000 fit young men from the munitions industries.

expansion of civilian production. Consequently, manpower should not in any case be employed on the manufacture of aircraft or other munitions of war for use only in the European theatre which could not be completed until after the end of 1945, while for the Japanese war items of equipment that were not absolutely essential should be eliminated. 'Over-insurance in provision is a luxury that we cannot afford'. The Ministerial Committee were then invited in consultation with the Chiefs of Staff and the J.W.P.S. to re-examine the manpower position in the light of this directive.

When the four Ministers finally sent up their budget for Cabinet approval the six months under review had more than half run out. The assumptions too on which it was built were out of date; for by 12th April the European war was virtually at an end. At the time at which it was approved the last manpower budget was almost a historical document. The balance sheet read as follows:¹

A—Releases from Munitions	
Admiralty	30,000
Ministry of Supply	81,000
Ministry of Aircraft Production	394,000
Iron and steel	20,000
	<hr/>
Total Releases	525,000
 B—Allocations	
Armed Forces, intakes	120,000
Group II	37,000
Group III, other than Board of Trade	39,500
Board of Trade	162,000
General reserve	17,000
	<hr/>
Total Allocations	375,500
 Excess of industrial wastage over intake	 149,500
	<hr/>
	525,000
	<hr/>

At the same meeting of the War Cabinet on 12th April the Ministerial Committee was asked to work out allocations for the second six months of 1945 on the assumption that the European war would have ended by 31st May. Thus 1st June became the official date for the beginning of Stage II. But when the four Ministers endeavoured to present a scheme it was with the admission that the military commitments contemplated by the Chiefs of Staff looked too heavy for the

¹ It omitted women for the Forces and also Civil Defence personnel.

country to bear on a partial reconversion basis. It would not, they submitted, be possible to maintain the projected scale of the war effort in the Far East and at the same time to meet civilian needs at home. The Cabinet made no decision; it suggested further consultations with the Chiefs of Staff and asked for revised proposals. Before these were ready the General Election had taken place and a new Administration had come into office. Three weeks later there was no longer any Stage II for which to plan. The war was over.

CHAPTER XV

LABOUR SUPPLY PROBLEMS, SEPTEMBER 1943—MAY 1945

IN THE LAST CHAPTERS we have been considering the attempts that were made to organise the redistribution of the diminishing working population so that those parts of the strategic programme that were vital for victory should not go short of essential manpower. But however carefully these plans were laid, there were contingencies which, at the time the allocations of manpower were being made, had either not yet matured or could not have been predicted. Some were directly connected with preparations for D-Day and, because of the need for the strictest secrecy, the quantity and type of labour and the places and times at which it would be required could not be disclosed in advance. Others arose from enemy action—the sudden call for workers to repair the damage caused by flying bombs and rockets. Thus the agreed pattern of manpower distribution had often at short notice to be changed and improvisations had hurriedly to be made. Because so much was at stake, the story deserves to be told in some detail.

In the closing stages of the preparations for the invasion of France there were two sets of plans whose timely execution depended upon a sufficient supply of the right type of labour. Firstly, workers were wanted to make and put together the component parts of the prefabricated floating harbours known as Mulberry. Secondly, in connection with the assembly of the expeditionary force at their places of embarkation the transport services both by rail and road had to be reinforced, and within the ports themselves dockers in sufficient numbers had to be collected, and craftsmen held in readiness to repair the damage that ships might be expected to suffer while leaving England and crossing the Channel.

(i)

Manpower for D-Day

(a) MULBERRY

In the Mulberry Programme there were three projects—each of which was known by a code name—for which additional labour, both skilled and unskilled, was specially required. The first, which was

called Phoenix, was the construction of concrete caissons to be used as breakwaters on the Normandy beaches. The second—Whale—consisted of the assembly of the prefabricated parts of pier heads and buffer pontoons; while the third—Bombardon or Anti-Bomb booms—was the erection of steel structures designed to form a shelter for unloading ships in the deep water anchorages outside the Phoenix breakwaters. Each of these projects called for different kinds of labour—Phoenix for building and civil engineering workers; Whale for skilled men in certain engineering occupations; Bombardon for a mixed labour force of steel erectors with a smaller contingent of civil engineering workers. As the labour demands for each project varied in type, so did the methods employed to satisfy them.

The Phoenix programme was put in hand in October 1943, when the Ministry of Supply asked for a labour force of 15,000 to be built up by the middle of December 1943. The sites where the concrete caissons were to be constructed were at the London Docks and Thames Estuary, Merseyside, Portsmouth, Southampton and Goole. Subsequently, the phasing was modified and by February 1944 the increased labour force had reached a peak of 20,000. These sudden demands for manpower came at a time when the labour force in the building and civil engineering industries had been greatly reduced to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces, and the men still left in the industries were already in employment connected with the war effort or engaged on essential maintenance work. There was also another difficulty. It was not possible to put the Phoenix construction in places where immobile labour was locally available; the sites had to be adjacent to waterways with the necessary depth of water and also to dry docks—where these could be spared from the urgent demands of shipping. Consequently, in order to supply in the short time available the labour required, special steps had to be taken jointly by the Ministries of Labour and Works. They were as follows. A ban was imposed on the starting of new building in the Phoenix areas, and an overriding priority was given for the allocation of special types of labour to the Phoenix contracts. The combined effect of these two measures was that practically all suitable local labour becoming available on the completion of jobs could be directed to Phoenix work, and that mobile labour could, as necessary, be brought in.

The most perplexing task from the labour supply point of view, however, was to obtain the requisite number of carpenters, scaffolders and steel fixers; the last two classes presented particular difficulty because of the relatively small number of such workers in the country and the competition of other Government projects, including the completion of silos in time for the harvest of 1944. It thus became a matter of getting on to the Phoenix jobs every mobile steel fixer and scaffolder who could possibly be spared from other work, and of making up

deficiencies by dilution and training. The Transport and General Workers' Union gave valuable assistance not only by circularising its branches for experienced fixers, but also by agreeing that building trade craftsmen might be temporarily used as trainee fixers and scaffolders, on the understanding that on the completion of Phoenix they would return to their normal trades. For the most part the craftsmen who were accordingly directed to Phoenix were bricklayers, and those who were accustomed to work at heights were selected as trainee scaffolders. By 11th February 1944 a labour force of 20,000 was at work, and included in this total were 1,000 scaffolders and over 1,600 experienced or trainee fixers. From April 1944 the Phoenix programme was expanded and the latest and largest new scheme, for which the number of workers required was put at 13,000, began to operate in July. By this time, however, the peak labour force, which was proportionately reduced as parts of the earlier contracts were completed, had dropped as low as 7,000. An additional 6,000 workers had thus to be found by September. This demand was the more difficult to meet because it coincided with the urgent need for building labour, and in particular carpenters, to repair the damage in London caused by flying bombs. By means of similar measures to those adopted for the earlier phases of the project, the labour force was again built up to the required strength, and the whole of the Phoenix programme was completed by October 1944.

Early in 1944 work on Whale began and the race to complete construction against towing dates began. The assembly of the prefabricated parts of the pier heads and buffer pontoons was carried out at Leith, Conway, Dartford and Wivenhoe near Colchester, and during the first five months of the year approximately 1,600 workers were supplied.¹ Of these some 1,200 were skilled men, about half of whom were electric welders who had to be craftsmen of the highest proficiency. All of them had to be taken from war production and, in order to cause as little disturbance as possible, the net was spread over the whole country. Withdrawals were made in small numbers from a large number of firms engaged on a wide range of production, and the identification of the establishments from which the skilled men should be taken was agreed between the Ministries of Labour and Supply, which throughout worked in close co-operation with each other. In some cases the workers were loaned, on the understanding that they would be sent back to their existing employment as soon as their services could be spared. As certain parts of the programme were completed, one site was able to come to the assistance of others; for example, Leith was able to send welders to Conway and, subsequently,

¹ In addition the labour force engaged on the manufacture of the components for Whale was at its peak estimated by the Ministry of Supply at about 15,000. See M.M. Postan: *British War Production*, p. 282.

both Leith and Conway supplemented the labour forces at Dartford and Wivenhoe.

Bombardon required on the assembly site at Southampton a mixed labour force of some 2,000.¹ Of this over 500 were skilled workers, 50 of whom were welders and 320 steel erectors. The latter were the most difficult to find, because the comparatively small number in this skilled occupation were already employed in shipyards and upon other important production. With the help of the Constructional Engineering Union, however, the requisite numbers were obtained, and the Bombardon assembly work was finished in such good time that it was possible to transfer the fifty welders to Whale, which was falling behind schedule. With this assistance, however, the labour on Whale had by D-Day completed its task and some of it had already been dispersed.

(b) TRANSPORT, ETC.

From this account of the ways in which labour was found for constructing and assembling the Mulberry harbours we may now turn to the other demand for manpower that arose in preparation for D-Day. The punctual assembly of the expeditionary force with its mass of equipment and materials at the scheduled ports of embarkation was bound to place a most severe strain upon all the transport services, and it was vital that there should be no hold-up in carrying out the carefully planned timetable. From discussions held at the beginning of 1944 it was clear that the labour forces employed on the railways, the roads and the docks would all have to be strengthened. Estimates were, accordingly, drawn up of the requirements of each service, and it was left to the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the other Government departments concerned to take whatever action it found necessary to find and produce the bodies. In aggregate the total number of additional workers required was not alarming—it was a matter of some tens of thousands—but with the manpower of the country fully absorbed in the war effort the problem was to decide from what sources withdrawals could be made with the least disturbance to other commitments. An additional complication was the secrecy that surrounded the plans for D-Day. It was due to the co-operative efforts of the different Government departments, employers and workers that despite the difficulties the demands were met fully and in time. Above all, it was a testimony to the efficiency of the machine which the Ministry of Labour had evolved and to the energy and versatility of its regional and local officers. Let us look at the different ways in which this success was achieved.

¹ In addition some 6,000 workers were employed away from the site on prefabrication, cutting plates, etc.

The needs of the railways in the Southern and Midland areas for additional staff were largely confined to the operating grades—guards, shunters, porters and the like. In total the vacancies notified to the local offices of the Ministry of Labour were of the order of 9,000, but in the state of the labour market there was little chance of meeting these relatively modest requirements under normal procedure. Regional controllers were, accordingly, instructed to give the vacancies what was called First Preference and, further, to reach agreement with the Ministry of Production on the industries and services from which suitable workers might be withdrawn. This covered all industries and services with the exception of those on the 'Designated' list.¹ It was then left to District Manpower Boards in consultation with the area officers of the departments concerned to select the individuals who should be transferred to the railways. Moreover, it was decided that men born in or before 1905 who were due to be called up for general service should be offered employment on the railways as an alternative to the Armed Forces and, to supplement the home supply, some 600 men were recruited from Eire to work in the Birmingham district. By this combination of methods not only was wastage made good, but during the first six months of the year there was a net increase of over 9,200 in the operating grades of the railways. The target set had been reached and passed.

In the road transport services the chief need was experienced drivers for commercial lorries and petrol carriers. Although the demands were phased over the weeks immediately preceding D-Day, in total they were much greater than the number of drivers that in the short time at its disposal the Ministry of Labour could expect to collect by the methods which it had successfully used to fill vacancies on the railways. Accordingly, an appeal was made in March 1944 through the press and the B.B.C. for volunteers of either sex who were experienced motor drivers and were prepared to handle commercial vehicles. The object of the scheme was to create a pool of drivers upon which calls could be made as required, and a Volunteer Drivers' Register was opened at local offices. With the exception of men employed in coal-mining and on a short list of vital work, all suitable applicants in other occupations were normally accepted. If their employers were unwilling to release them, the District Manpower Boards decided in consultation with the Government department concerned whether the withdrawals would be justified. The response was excellent and was far in excess of the actual demands, which had been greatly over-estimated. By the end of July over 13,500 drivers had been placed in employment with road transport organisations in different parts of the country, and the Register contained a further 45,000 whose employers were willing to

¹ See above p. 208.

release them. Some of these volunteers were subsequently used as lorry drivers for N.A.A.F.I. overseas. Included in their cargoes was an ample supply of beer from home breweries which, as a result of special action taken by the Ministry of Labour, had obtained the additional bottlers they required.

Besides satisfying the labour requirements of the transport services to the points of embarkation, it was equally necessary to ensure that at the ports themselves there were sufficient workers available to load the ships with the equipment and materials that had been collected. For the efficient and expeditious handling of this work a strong nucleus of experienced dockers was essential; but at most of the ports in question the number of locally registered dockers was insufficient. It was in a situation such as this that the value of the National Dock Labour Scheme was shown.¹ Under the scheme the Corporation was authorised to regulate the size of the national register in the light of anticipated requirements, and to transfer dockers from one port to another. During the first eight months of 1944 both these powers were exercised. Firstly, the total number of registered dockers was raised from under 70,000 to over 77,000. This was achieved by an intensive recruiting campaign, in which suitable men employed in other industries or services were invited to volunteer to work in the docks. The response was good and, after rejecting those whose withdrawal from their present occupations would have been injurious to the war effort, sufficient recruits of the right type were obtained. Secondly, considerable numbers of dockers were transferred from one port to another—notably from London to Southampton—and, when this had been done, inexperienced labour, both military and civilian, was locally recruited to work under the direction of the experienced dockers.

Two other emergency measures in connection with D-Day may be briefly mentioned. In anticipation of the damage which the vast flotilla might suffer while leaving port and crossing the Channel, arrangements were made early in the year to have teams of ship repairers available in the shipyards on the South Coast. In addition to a large scale redistribution of workers among the shipyards in the South and South West Regions, over 320 volunteer iron workers were transferred partly from Scotland and partly from the North East of England. Furthermore, the call-up for the Armed Forces of men employed in shipyards and Admiralty establishments in the South of England was temporarily suspended, and suitable men in other industries were earmarked for transfer to the shipyards, if required. Secondly, in order to man harbour service craft during the invasion operations the Admiralty set up a Small Vessels Pool. Offers of voluntary service were invited and names were recorded at the local offices

¹ See above p. 140.

of the Ministry of Labour. By 20th May the response had been so satisfactory that further recruiting under the scheme became unnecessary.

(ii)

Flying Bombs and Rockets (V.1 and V. 2)

On 14th June 1944 the first flying bomb (V.1.) fell in London, and by the end of the month, in addition to the toll of shops, factories and churches, houses were being damaged at the rate of 21,000 a day. The War Cabinet, accordingly, decided that repairs to houses should be given the highest priority and that, if necessary, workers should be brought in from other parts of the country. The total labour force that would be required was put at between 40,000 and 50,000. Towards this there were already 28,000 men in London engaged on repairing the damage from earlier raids; the remainder were to be got in the following ways. In the London area men employed on maintenance work were to be transferred to war damage repair; in the provinces, with the exception of Scotland and the areas where construction for Phoenix was in operation, all men becoming available on turnover were to be sent to London. A further 10,000—5,000 in London and 5,000 in the provinces—were to be obtained by proportional reductions in the labour forces allocated by the Ministry of Works to the different Government departments for their constructional programmes. The hope was that, as far as possible, contractors in the provinces would voluntarily undertake repair work in London and would bring their workers with them; but, if necessary, directions were to be issued—by the Ministry of Works to firms and by the Ministry of Labour to individual workers.¹ The chief difficulty was to find enough slaters and tilers for roofing repairs, and in the middle of July special steps had to be taken to deal with the acute shortage. An appeal was made to experienced men who were in other employment to offer their services, and instructions were issued that every suitable firm, together with workers up to the age of sixty, should be directed to do repair work in London. Furthermore, an agreement was reached with the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives that other building craftsmen with the exception of joiners and plumbers, whether or not they had had earlier experience, might be employed on roof repairs, provided that their normal occupational classification was not changed.

¹ Two large firms acted as notional contractors to whom all the men from the provinces were directed and who paid the men one day's wages and one night's subsistence, for which they were subsequently reimbursed by the Government. The men were, then re-directed by the Ministry of Labour to the contractors for whom they worked.

In addition to these measures for obtaining workers from within civilian industry help was forthcoming from the Armed Forces. The Navy and the Air Force each released 2,000 men and the Army, in addition to finding between 70 and 80 skilled tilers, provided a contingent of over 2,000 from the Pioneer Corps. These contributions were supplemented by about 4,000 from Civil Defence and the National Fire Service. By August 1944 the total labour force employed on housing repairs in London had risen to 60,000, whilst some additional thousands were engaged on the clearance of débris. These numbers, it was thought, should suffice to restore to a reasonable condition of comfort the estimated total of 700,000 houses that were capable of being repaired, and further importations from the provinces were suspended.

The decision to limit the labour force to a maximum of 60,000—apart from such additions as might come from building workers belonging to London who would become available on the completion of Phoenix contracts—had soon to be set aside. In the middle of September Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve was appointed by the Government to co-ordinate repair work in London and the provision of temporary housing accommodation. In his first report he estimated that with the existing labour it would take at least a year to complete the housing repair programme. Quicker progress was essential and, to achieve this, he asked for an additional 40,000 workers, of whom about two-thirds would have to be craftsmen. His advice was accepted and immediate action was taken to build up the labour force to 100,000. Instructions were issued that mobile craftsmen should again be directed from the provinces to London and that Scotland, which had hitherto been exempted, should, subject to the requirements of the Scottish Housing Programme, make its contribution. At the same time an appeal was made by the Minister of Labour to skilled building craftsmen employed in other industries to volunteer for repair work in London and, in order to increase the supply of slates and tiles, experienced tile makers and slate quarry workers now in other occupations were asked to return to their earlier employment. Further releases from Civil Defence were also arranged, and the Admiralty agreed that the shipyard joiners whom it had lent for Phoenix might be temporarily employed on housing repairs. For the planning and supervision of the work surveyors in private practice were mobilised for service under the local authorities, and the call-up of such members of the latter's staff as were required for carrying out the repair programme was, with the exception of young men of eighteen years of age, suspended. These direct steps to obtain workers were supplemented by more indirect measures for ensuring that available labour was concentrated and maintained on housing repairs. The licensing limit for civilian building in London was reduced from £100 to £10, and the smaller builders were

organised in working parties of sixty to a hundred men under a competent builder or clerk of works, to carry out repair work either for a local authority or the Ministry of Works. Lastly, it was decided to schedule under the Essential Work Order the whole of the London Civil Defence Region as a single group of sites. This gave greater flexibility than would have resulted from the scheduling of the sites separately, because it enabled workers to be moved from one to another without having first to obtain the permission of a National Service officer.

By all these means the labour force had by 9th November 1944 been raised to 112,000, and in a month's time it had grown still further to 130,000. Of this total 29,500 had come from the provinces under directions from the Ministry of Labour and 14,000 had transferred with their employers, while out of 14,000 who had responded to the Minister's appeal about 8,000 were employed in London.

But the danger and destruction from aerial attacks was not yet over. When the sites in Northern France from which most of the flying bombs had been let off had by 1st September been captured, the Germans started to discharge them from aircraft. While the number that reached Greater London was much smaller than in the earlier stages, the areas over which they fell were wider and more scattered. But flying bombs were not the only missiles that were now to be used. On 6th September a new type of bomb—the long range rocket (V.2)—fell in London. During November the scale of attack rose from four to six rockets a day and, after a quieter spell in December, it reached its fullest momentum in the first three months of 1945.¹ Although the rockets did less damage to property than the flying bombs, nevertheless a substantial number of houses were rendered uninhabitable, and workers had to be diverted from flying-bomb sites to do first-aid repairs. In these circumstances it was decided that the labour force assembled in London—which in any case was running down through normal wastage—would have to be further increased. The Ministry of Works resumed its recruitment of building labourers from Eire and some contractors with their workers were brought over from Northern Ireland but, in order to avoid further accommodation difficulties in London, most of the additional labour required was to be obtained from firms and workers living within daily travelling distance of the damaged sites. As an indirect method of encouraging them to move, the licensing limit of £10 for building, which had hitherto applied only to Greater London, was now extended to an area within a thirty-five mile radius of the centre of London. As a result, the army of repair workers rose by March to a net total of 135,000 and, when this had been achieved, further importations were stopped. During the remaining months of 1945 the labour force of some 50,000 that had been

¹ See T. H. O'Brien: *Civil Defence*, Chapter XVI.

drawn from the provinces was retained on work in London. Applications by individuals to return to their native towns were considered on their merits, but it was not till December that it was announced that workers who wanted to go home might now apply for their release to the National Service officer.

The account which we have been giving of the mobilisation of an army of workers for repairing bomb-damaged houses would be incomplete without some reference to the ways in which workers brought to London from the provinces were accommodated. The difficulties were formidable. Lodgings were being snatched up by the thousands of Londoners who had lost their homes, and the available residue proved quite insufficient to house all the workers that were being imported. Makeshift arrangements had, in consequence, to be rapidly improvised. In the end, the problem was satisfactorily resolved; but, for a considerable time, some workers had to put up with the barest amenities. It is a tribute to their goodwill and determination to get on with their jobs that they endured these privations with few protests and complaints.

The general plan was that on arrival in London transferred workers would first report to a reception centre, from which they would then be allocated to particular contractors and, as soon as possible, provided with suitable accommodation. Fortunately there was in Onslow Square a hostel which could house 3,000. It consisted of ninety houses and eleven huts equipped with washing and feeding facilities, and had been originally intended for French refugees. This was taken over and used as the main reception centre. But soon the number of workers being transferred exceeded the capacity of Onslow Square, and a second centre had to be hastily got ready at Wembley Stadium. As reception arrangements would quickly disintegrate if workers remained for any length of time in one or other of the reception centres, it was essential to lose no time in finding them other accommodation in reasonable proximity to their work. At first it was thought that enough billets and lodgings might be obtained and, when this hope proved illusory, the Ministry of Works compiled a list of premises that might be turned into hostels or camps. The National Service Hostels Corporation undertook to manage all accommodation housing 250 or more workpeople, and the building contractors agreed to run the smaller units. By the middle of July considerable progress had been made, and an inter-departmental committee, which had been set up to supervise the arrangements, reported that of the 16,000 workers who had so far come to London 10,000 were in billets, 2,000 in hostels run either by the Corporation or contractors, and the remainder at Onslow Square, Wembley and in two Ministry of Health hostels in Poplar and Hackney. At the end of the month three vacated American Red Cross properties and a number of hostels that had been used to house refugees

from Gibraltar became available, and the Corporation agreed to run them provided that the Ministry of Labour could give it the necessary staff. Clerical workers were, accordingly, seconded from the Ministry's own establishment and, as a result of intensive efforts, 500 domestic workers of both sexes were supplied by the end of August. At this stage the labour force on repairs was stabilised at 60,000 and, on the assumption that no more workers would be brought into London, it was decided to try and find premises into which those men who were the least satisfactorily housed might be moved.

Before, however, any effective action in this direction could be taken, it was, as we have already seen, found necessary to increase the labour repair force to 100,000. As fully half of this increment would have to come from the provinces, this meant that additional accommodation for at least 20,000 workers would somehow or other have to be found. As a first step it was decided that responsibility should rest with a single department—the Ministry of Labour, and that the functions of the Ministry of Works should in future be limited to finding and equipping premises, and—in the capacity of agents for the Ministry of Labour—to making arrangements for contractors to run hostels for their own men. On the suggestion of Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve enquiries were made about the possibility of taking over parts of Olympia, the White City and Church House; but it was found that they were either already full of stores which it would take weeks to clear, or were being reserved for other purposes. The Air Force, however, agreed to vacate a number of houses in which troops were billeted in St. John's Wood. With these and other premises that had meanwhile been found nineteen additional hostels, with capacity for 9,000 had been opened by the end of October, and seventeen further schemes were on the point of completion. These arrangements proved sufficient to house all the transferred workers—although the additional numbers that had been brought in were considerably above the September estimate—and at the beginning of December it was found possible to start rehousing men who were in schools or other unsatisfactory accommodation.

(iii)

Coal-mining – the Ballot Scheme

Besides the labour requirements in connection with the launching of the invasion of the Continent, there was an urgent need to build up the manpower of the coal-mining industry. In the House of Commons on 29th July 1943 the Minister of Labour reported on the situation.¹ The average number of workers on the colliery books was 700,000 and, if sufficient coal were to be produced to meet the demands of the war

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 391, Col. 1798.

programme, the total would have to be increased by a net addition of 20,000, if possible before the end of the year. In the middle of August the Ministers of Labour and Fuel submitted to the Lord President's Committee their recommendations on how this might be accomplished. To attempt to obtain further releases of experienced miners from either the Armed Forces or from industry was impracticable. The small numbers that might be forthcoming would be out of all proportion to the dislocation that their release would entail. The deficiency would, therefore, have to be made good by bringing into the industry inexperienced workers and training them to perform their new duties. This might ultimately involve the application of compulsion but, before this drastic remedy was imposed, it was worth while seeing what could be done by voluntary methods. The option to volunteer for employment in underground coal-mining had already been extended to all men—and not, as hitherto, only those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five—who were being called up for general service in the Forces. It was not, however, expected that this would produce more than a small number. The two Ministers, therefore, proposed that a great publicity campaign should be immediately put in hand, to bring home to the country at large, and particularly to boys and young men of military age and their parents, that coal production was vital to the war effort and that men engaged on it would be helping the country just as much as those in the Armed Forces. All suitable men who responded to the invitation should be released from their present employment, unless they were engaged on aircraft work or were holding key positions in other important sectors of the production programme. These proposals were approved by the Lord President's Committee.

The publicity campaign failed to produce anything like the number of volunteers that was required, and on 12th October the Minister of Fuel told the House of Commons that the need, which had been anticipated, to call up compulsorily to the coal-mines fit men of military age had now arisen.¹ To carry out this decision the Minister of Labour was a month later ready with a plan which the War Cabinet approved. Popularly known as the 'Bevin Boys' Scheme' it was in many ways characteristic of its author. It was ingenious but simple to understand; it was impartial and equitable in that to its automatic operation the only exceptions that would be permitted were proved cases of genuine hardship.

The scheme was a lottery. The field consisted of men born on or after 1st January 1918 who had registered under the National Service Acts and at their medical examination had been placed in either grade I or grade II (a) (feet),² and who had not yet received enlistment notices.

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 392, Col. 764-5.

² Men in this category were fit except for foot defects which did not incapacitate them for coal-mining.

The selection of those who should be directed to employment in the pits after training was then determined by ballot. The method was as follows. A number was drawn from the ten figures (0 - 9) with which a man's national service registration number could end, and men whose registration numbers ended with the drawn digit became the coal-mining 'ballottees'. Thus, if the number 6 was drawn, men whose registration numbers were, for example, WLB. 14076 and 14186 would be earmarked for the mines. If the draw of one digit would not give the number required, two digits (e.g. 6 and 7) were drawn and conversely, where fewer men were needed, two final digits (e.g. 67) were used as the means of selection. To avoid the registrants getting the impression that a particular number was according to their point of view lucky or unlucky, a new draw was made after each new registration, and this always took place in the presence of the Minister himself. The only classes of men who were excepted from the ballot were those who had been accepted for flying duties in the Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm or as artificers in submarines, and those in a short list of highly skilled occupations, who only entered the Forces in their Service trades and who were already debarred from volunteering for the mines. Young men who were members of Senior and Junior Training Corps, the A.T.C. and the Home Guard were all included in the ballot. To have excepted them on account of the training they had undergone would have meant that virtually no public schoolboys would have become liable to be sent to the mines. Preferential treatment of this kind, the Minister recognised, would endanger the whole scheme, which in any case was not likely to be popular.

When the results of the ballot were known, the men selected for the mines—which were scheduled under the Essential Work Order—were issued with directions to go to a specified centre where they were given some weeks preliminary training before being allocated to a particular pit.¹ In common with persons directed to civil employment they had then an opportunity of appealing against the direction, and such appeals were heard by Local Appeal Boards, which did not give decisions but made their recommendations to the National Service officers. Since all the men in question had already had a statutory opportunity at the time of their medical examination of applying for postponement on grounds of personal hardship, the Boards were instructed that appeals on this score should be rejected, unless in a particular case it could be shown that since the proper time for making a hardship claim new circumstances justifying postponement had arisen, or there were special circumstances which made employment in coal-mining an exceptional hardship. As had been more or less anticipated, a large number of appeals against the directions issued

¹ For the nature of the training see below p. 338.

were made—the average was as high as forty per cent. of the number in the ballot. The main grounds of appeal were preference for the Forces or medical unfitness. The former were consistently rejected by the Boards; in the case of the latter a new medical examination was ordered before a recommendation was made. If a man was found physically fit but there were psychological reasons—such as claustrophobia—why he should not be sent to work in the mines, he was called up for the Forces; if some physical defect was detected, he was re-graded and found other suitable civil employment. In all, the Boards had by May 1945 dealt with 8,619 applications of which 8,153 were rejected.

After the appeals had been decided most men accepted the position and went to their training centres. Some, however, refused to comply with the directions issued to them. In such cases legal action was initiated. When brought before the Courts some men recanted and, on giving an undertaking that they would go to their training centre, they were set free. Those who persisted in their opposition were normally sentenced to a period of imprisonment but, if while serving their sentence they changed their minds, they were released. The Minister, subsequently, decided that, when a man after serving two periods of imprisonment or one three-months' sentence again refused to comply with a direction, he should not be again prosecuted but, if medically fit, he should be called up to the Forces and, if found unfit, should be sent to appropriate civil employment. Up to the end of October 1944, of 16,000 youths picked by ballot, 500 had been prosecuted for non-compliance with the National Service officer's direction or for leaving their coal-mining employment without his permission, and of this total 143 had been sentenced to imprisonment.¹

By the end of 1943 training was being provided at five Government Centres for Bevin Boys and volunteers and in the course of the next few months six more were opened. During the life of the scheme, which was wound up at the end of the European war, 21,800 were allocated by ballot to coal-mining. The shortage of manpower in the pits was thus temporarily alleviated but, although for the most part the conscripts settled down with reasonable contentment and efficiency to their new employment, few of them were prepared to think of coal-mining as their permanent occupation. Compulsion was a war-time necessity, but was no solution of the long-term problems of the industry. The only way in which its manpower could be built up and maintained was to increase the voluntary flow of young workers by making conditions and prospects more attractive both to the boys and to their parents.²

¹ H. of C. Deb. Vol. 406, Col. 1328 and 1360, 14th December 1944.

² See below pp. 358-361.

CHAPTER XVI

RECONSTRUCTION PLANS AND RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES

LONG BEFORE the end of hostilities in Europe was in sight the Government began to give thought to the manpower problems that would arise in the transition from war to peace. The dominant considerations were partly economic and social, and partly psychological. In the first place the civilian industries, which had been drained of labour for the Forces and the manufacture of munitions, would have to be built up again but, with an anticipated shortage of manpower, priority would have to be given to those which could contribute most to the revival of the export trade, or whose products and services were most urgently needed at home. Secondly, the change over from war to peace-time production would have to be regulated so as to avoid a repetition of what had happened in the aftermath of the First World War, when a short post-war boom had been followed by trade depression and widespread and continuing unemployment. Lastly, when the fighting was over there would be a natural impatience on the part of men and women to be released from their war work and to return home and find permanent employment suited to their capacities and aspirations. In this connection one of the biggest problems would be the satisfactory resettlement of men and women who had either been prevented from starting on their careers or whose training had been interrupted by their war service. There were thus two essentials—first, to frame a policy which would be intelligible and equitable and, secondly, to provide the means by which it could, when required, be carried into orderly operation. The machine of mobilisation could be put into reverse, but the speed at which it was to be allowed to run down would have to be carefully watched. In other words the end of the war would not be the end of controls. Unless some were retained, reconstruction would drift into chaos.

In due course the Government produced a general plan of post-war employment and announced its arrangements for the deployment of manpower in the transition period after the end of the European war. In addition it sponsored a number of schemes designed to assist, in particular, younger men and women to train for a skilled occupation or a professional career. In the following paragraphs we shall first give a broad account of the employment plans, and then describe the main

features of the resettlement schemes which, although for the most part not put into operation until after the war, were drafted and approved while fighting was still in progress.

(i)

Reconstruction Plans

(a) WHITE PAPER ON EMPLOYMENT POLICY

The first important document to appear was a White Paper on Employment Policy, which was issued in May 1944.¹ In it was outlined the policy which the Government proposed to follow in pursuit of what it accepted as one of its primary aims and responsibilities—the maintenance after the war of a high and stable level of employment. For this to be achieved there were two fundamental conditions: the expansion of international trade and the maintenance of sufficient expenditure upon goods and services. While the former was largely dependent upon the outcome of negotiations with other Powers, the latter was in the control of the Government, which would take the necessary steps to make capital available where and when it was most required. In the transition from war to peace there would inevitably be great changes in the distribution of the manpower of the country. Whereas during the war eighty per cent. of employment in the manufacturing industries was on work for the Government, in the early post-war period the situation would be reversed and there would be a movement, perhaps of the order of seven millions, from the Forces and munitions to civilian industries or services. Where plant could be quickly turned over to production for the civilian market these transfers would for many not involve any change of employment, but large numbers would have to seek new occupations and new places of employment. Side by side with the gradual release of the labour force engaged upon the war programme there would be a transformation in the demand for the products of labour. The requirements of the Armed Forces were likely for a time to remain high, but there would also be an immense need for all the things which the country had had to do without during the war. More houses would have to be built, shops would have to be replenished and, if the country was to pay its way, the manufacturing industries would have to recover and extend their overseas connections. The problem was further complicated by the fact that some of the labour that would be released would not be in the places where the demand would be highest, while by no means all who would be set free from their war-time occupations would have the special skills and experience for the available jobs. There was thus a danger that, while general unemployment in the post-war years was

¹ Cmd. 6527.

improbable, local patches would occur. Its incidence would be most marked in those areas that depended largely for employment upon a single industry, such as coal or shipbuilding or cotton, whose prosperity was affected by the state of international trade. To cope with these difficulties the Government had three plans in mind. It would seek to create a diversification of employment in the unbalanced areas by encouraging employers in other industries to set up their factories in these localities. Secondly, it would press on with an extensive programme of house building and in this way hope to remove one of the main obstacles to the transfer of workers to areas where their services could be profitably used. Lastly, it would provide financial assistance so that men and women could train to equip themselves for trades and professions in which there were good opportunities for employment.

The White Paper was confined to a statement of policy whose success, as the foreword explained, was ultimately dependent on the understanding and support of the community as a whole, and especially on the efforts of employers and workers in industry. The way in which the plans that had been outlined were to be carried out was left for exposition in subsequent statements. With the increasing probability that the war would end in two stages, attention was first focused on the preparation of plans for the reallocation of manpower in the interim period, as distinct from demobilisation which could not begin until the war with Japan was ended. Towards the end of September 1944 a White Paper set out the basis on which partial releases from the Forces to industry would be put into effect.¹ This was followed in November by a second White Paper dealing with the reallocation of manpower between civilian employments after the end of the European War.²

(b) SCHEME FOR RELEASES FROM THE FORCES

As early as 1941 the War Cabinet had begun to think about reconstruction problems, and had appointed a committee under Sir William (later Earl) Jowitt, the Paymaster General, to make proposals. The task of working out the machinery of demobilisation had been entrusted to a committee of officials, and in November 1942 it presented its final report. After the First World War demobilisation had been planned on the basis of releases as employment became available and, partly because it was abused and partly owing to its inherent unfairness, the scheme had broken down. To avoid such a repetition the committee recommended that demobilisation of all ranks—men and women—should, subject to military needs, proceed by groups on the basis of a combination of age and length of service.

¹ Cmd. 6548.

² Cmd. 6568.

Provision would, however, have to be made for the immediate release of men in special priority classes, but on a scale which would not interfere with the main scheme. The classes which the committee had in mind were individuals or industrial groups vitally needed for reconstruction, returned prisoners of war, cases of great personal hardship and married women. These proposals were submitted by the Paymaster General to the War Cabinet, which gave its general approval and authorised a broad statement of policy to be made in the House of Commons.

In the summer of 1943 when it became apparent that the war might end in two stages it was decided to re-examine the scheme of demobilisation that had been prepared, and to consider what amendments would be required to make it a suitable instrument for regulating partial releases from the Forces at the end of the German war. Lengthy discussions—an account of which will be found in Appendix 2 at the end of this chapter—took place, and it was not till the late summer of 1944 that a plan that had been drawn up by the Minister of Labour was finally agreed. On 22nd September 1944 a White Paper containing detailed information about the plan was issued.¹

The White Paper was called the 'Re-allocation of Manpower between the Armed Forces and Civilian Employment during the Interim Period between the Defeat of Germany and the Defeat of Japan'. Before describing the way in which men and women would be released from the Services, it set out the underlying principles that governed the plan. The paramount consideration was that there could be no break in the war effort after hostilities in Europe ceased; there must be the maximum deployment of the Forces needed to bring complete and final victory at the earliest possible moment. Consequently, in the interim period it was not a question of demobilisation but of the reallocation of manpower between the Forces and industry to meet the requirements of the changed situation. Secondly, an essential part of this reallocation would be the continuation of compulsory recruitment of men for the Forces, so as to bring relief to men who had served for long periods and to enable more of them to return to their homes. Similarly, it would be necessary to maintain the requisite control over industry and labour in the interim period, as the demand for munitions and other essential production would continue to be heavy. Thirdly, the arrangements for releases from the Forces, which it was hoped would be on a substantial scale, must satisfy two conditions. They must be clear and fair, so that men and women in the Services would understand and accept them; and, secondly, they must be capable of simple application. With these points in mind the Government had decided that an equitable and reasonable scheme could best be secured on the basis of releases according to age and length of service; but it also recognised the need

¹ Cmd. 6548.

for a limited provision for certain urgent work of reconstruction on which a beginning must be made in the interim period. The plan, accordingly, provided for two separate methods of selecting men for return to civilian life. Those qualifying by age and length of service were to be placed in Class A; those who were required for reconstruction work would constitute Class B. These arrangements would also apply to women, with the addition that married women, if they so desired, would be given priority over all others.

We may now look a little more closely at this dual plan and at the proposed distinction in treatment of those released in each class. In Class A men were to be released in groups based on a combination of age and length of service, and two months of service was to be treated as equivalent to one additional year of age. For example, a man of twenty-two with four years' service would be in the same group as a man of forty with one year's service, and a man of twenty-four with four years' service in the same group as a man of thirty with three years' service. The only exception to this rule would be that men of fifty and over would be treated as a priority class to be released, if they so desired, before other men. In Class B the men to be specially transferred from the Forces would be those who before enlistment had been in particular occupations specified by the Ministry of Labour as required for urgent reconstruction work, in which the building of houses would take precedence. In selecting the required numbers in a particular occupation the principle of age and length of service would as far as possible be observed. In addition, there would be a few specialists for whom application had been made through the appropriate Government department. The numbers coming out of the Forces in Class B would be small in proportion to those in Class A, and transfers in Class B would in no case begin until a start had been made with releases in Class A. It was further essential to the scheme that there should be a clearly marked difference in the treatment of men released in Class A in their turn and of men transferred in Class B out of their turn. Men in Class A were to be given eight weeks' leave with full pay and allowances and a war service grant. At the end of their furlough they would be placed in a special class of the Reserve, from which they would be recalled only in an extreme emergency. During this period of eight weeks they would be permitted to exercise their reinstatement rights¹ and, if they had no jobs to which to return, they would be free to choose their own employment. The employment exchanges would give them assistance, but would not use any powers of direction that might still be in force. By contrast, men transferred in

¹ The reinstatement provisions of the National Service Acts were replaced by the Reinstatement in Civil Employment Act of 21st March 1944, which came into operation on 1st August 1944. The purpose of the Act was to put existing legal rights on a practical basis and to extend them to cover persons who had volunteered for service in the Armed Forces and the equivalent Women's Services.

Class B were to be given three weeks' leave with full pay, allowances and a war service grant, and would then be placed on the Reserve. They would be directed to their reconstruction employments and, while in them, would retain their reinstatement rights, but they would be liable to be recalled individually to the Forces if they ceased to work at the jobs to which they had been sent. Men selected for Class B would not be transferred against their wishes, if they preferred to wait their normal turn for release under Class A, but once they had been transferred in Class B they would not be eligible to apply for inclusion in Class A.

Such were the main provisions of the plan for reallocation in the interim period between the ends of the two wars. The best criterion of its equity and practicability is that, when the Japanese war ended only three months after the surrender of Germany, the scheme of orderly releases was used without modification—and with little criticism—for the demobilisation of men and women in the Armed Forces.

(c) SCHEME FOR THE REDISTRIBUTION OF CIVILIAN MANPOWER

The White Paper dealing with the redistribution of civilian manpower after the end of the European war began by sketching in the background against which the scheme had been framed. The main task was to ensure that the limited resources—which in total would be inadequate to meet total demand—were concentrated first on making munitions for the Japanese war and, secondly, upon production that was most important to national recovery and the improvement of standards of living. A close check would have in consequence to be kept on the redistribution of manpower. Some industries would be able to give up workers, and most of those released would have to be steered into employment in accordance with national requirements: by contrast, other industries which had been depleted by the withdrawal of their labour for war work would have to be reinforced. Furthermore, the extent to which employers could be permitted to recruit the personnel they desired would depend upon the importance for the time being of the production upon which they were engaged, while not all workers would be able to take up permanent employment as quickly as they would like.

With these warnings the White Paper then set out the principles that would govern reallocation. While all persons in the country must continue to be regarded as available to make their appropriate contribution to the life and work of the nation, the aim of the policy was to enable those who so desired to return home to their normal work or to some other employment offering prospects of permanency and, secondly, to facilitate the transfer of experienced workers back to their former industries. It would not, however, be equitable to allow

releases to be determined purely on the occurrence of redundancy, because that would have the consequence that among persons with equal claims for release some would be set free, while others would have to be retained according to the nature of the industries or establishments in which they happened to be employed. It was, however, intended to give priority in the order of releases to workers who on account of age were anxious to retire or take employment nearer their homes, or who had been away from their homes for three years or more upon war work. The proposed scheme for carrying out this policy was as follows:

1. A class (called Class K) would be formed of persons who on personal grounds merited sympathetic treatment. This would consist of women with household responsibilities and women wishing to rejoin their husbands on their release from the Forces; women over sixty and men over sixty-five years of age. All of these would, if they so desired, be allowed to retire from industry, irrespective of the work on which they were engaged.
2. Members of Class K, who did not wish to retire, and workers who had been three or more years away from their homes would be granted priority of release for transfer to employment of importance near their homes, irrespective of the work upon which they were engaged or whether they were redundant, unless there were strong production reasons to the contrary.
3. In establishments with a surplus of labour, workers in the two priority classes mentioned above would be first released and others would then be selected in the following order of priority, which had been determined partly on national and partly on personal grounds.
 - (A) For call-up to the Forces: men aged eighteen to twenty-seven.
 - (B) For transfer to other employment:
 - (i) Those needed for priority vacancies in civilian industries;
 - (ii) Those who had worked away from their home areas for less than three years, but more than one, and wanted to get employment nearer their homes;
 - (iii) Other releases in the order determined by industrial agreements.
4. In industries and establishments needing to maintain or expand their labour forces, applications from workers outside the two priority classes to transfer nearer their homes would be granted as soon as substitutes could be found to replace them, and the same order of priority would be observed as for the industries with surplus personnel.

After describing the different status and obligations of persons released from the Forces on age and length of service as compared with those released for reconstruction work, the White Paper set out the controls which it was proposed should continue in the interim period. Young men and women as they reached the age of liability would be required to register for National Service. The former would be available for call-up and, if not required, would be sent to important civilian work. The latter would be used to replace older women. They would not be called up for the Women's Services, but they would be permitted to volunteer. Directions under Defence Regulation 58A would remain in force, but would be very sparingly used and as soon as possible dispensed with altogether. The Essential Work Orders would also still be required, but there would be changes in their application. Some industries that had been chiefly engaged on war work might be de-scheduled, while others, because of their importance for civilian reconstruction, might be scheduled for the first time. No obstacles would be placed in the way of releasing men and women in Class K from scheduled undertakings. The chief change that was contemplated was in the control of engagements. It was proposed that the existing Restriction on Engagement Order, which applied to the engineering and building industries, and the Control of Engagement Order for women should be rescinded, and their place taken by a single comprehensive Control of Engagement Order that would apply to all occupations but with certain age limitations. Under it all men between the ages of eighteen and fifty and all women between the ages of eighteen and forty would be required to obtain their employment through an employment exchange.

The scheme of allocation between civilian industries was, like its counterpart for releases from the Services, built upon just and coherent principles. Intended for the interim period only, it was in large measure the basis on which employment policy in the months which succeeded the end of the Japanese war was carried out.

(ii)

Resettlement Schemes

From this account of the plans made for the reallocation of manpower we shall now turn to the training schemes that were designed to help men and women to resettle themselves satisfactorily in civilian life. Whereas workers who before the war had already established themselves in trades or professions would normally be able to return, with at the most a refresher course, to their original or, where that had gone, to comparable employment, there were large numbers of younger persons who had been called up or directed to war work before they

had had an opportunity of starting or completing their training for the career of their choice. It was primarily to help them that the schemes, which we are about to describe, were introduced. Although the schemes differed from each other in respect of the classes or types of people for whom they were separately intended, eligibility to profit by them was in all of them basically the same. Applicants were required to show that they had had a period of full-time service during the war on work of national importance, and that by reason of this war service they had been unable to start or had suffered interruption in training for a career, or that because of changed circumstances they were unable to resume their previous careers and needed training to enable them to obtain satisfactory employment suited to their capacities. These conditions of eligibility were applied to the three main schemes: Further Education and Training, Business, and Vocational Training, and with some modifications to a fourth, the Interrupted Apprenticeships Scheme.

(a) THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SCHEME

The Further Education and Training Scheme was intended to help those who had reached a standard of education which should equip them to continue their studies at a University, or to undertake training for a career in one of the professions or for a responsible position in industry or commerce. The scheme was open to men and women. Applicants were invited to indicate the profession or type of business for which they wished to train and the qualifications they hoped to acquire, and wherever possible to make their own arrangements for a suitable course of study. Thus, for example, a man who wanted to go to Oxford or Cambridge was required to produce evidence that a College was willing to accept him, or, if he wanted to become a solicitor or an accountant, that he had found a firm that was willing to give him his articles and an institution where he could take classes in preparation for his examinations. If, however, he had been unable to fix himself up and he appeared to be suitable for the career of his choice, the selecting body endeavoured to arrange a suitable course of study for him. The scheme was administered jointly by the Ministry of Labour, the Board of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture.¹ The Ministry of Labour, which vetted all applications on the score of eligibility, dealt with applicants for training for one of the professions or for industry, the Board of Education with those who wanted to go to a University or a Technical College, and the Ministry of Agriculture with the much smaller number who wished to learn the theory and practice of farming or forestry. An award to a successful applicant took the form of

¹ In Scotland by the Ministry of Labour and the Scottish Education and Agriculture Departments.

payment to cover fees, tuition and books, and a maintenance grant up to a maximum of £160—with the exception that for those going to a University or Technical College the maintenance grant was varied to conform with the current cost of living at the particular educational establishment. A married applicant might also receive an allowance not exceeding £110 for his wife and £40 for each of his children.¹

(b) TRAINING FOR BUSINESS

At the beginning of 1945 it was felt that insufficient provision had been made for men coming out of the Forces who wanted to go into business, but who had had little or no knowledge of what that would involve. Accordingly, a committee largely composed of business men was set up and in September 1945 its report was published.² It recommended that short courses, designed to give a basic knowledge of the structure of the business world and of the different problems with which it was concerned, should be set up in technical and commercial colleges. These courses might be either full or part-time, but should be limited to the equivalent of three months' full-time instruction. They might be taken by ex-Service men either before or after they had been successful in obtaining employment, and would be particularly suitable for those between the ages of twenty and thirty. The value of the scheme would be twofold. By giving a basic training in business methods it would, it was hoped, overcome some of the difficulties that employers would find in taking on men who were above the normal age of entry into business and, secondly, the short duration of the courses would mean that there need be only a short interval after his release before the ex-Service man might expect to find himself in paid employment. For a married man, in particular, this was a consideration of importance. In the immediate post-war years the scheme was further developed by the addition of specialised courses on the top of the basic course, and the hopes of its promoters were substantially realised.

(c) VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Similar facilities to those made available under the Further Education and Training Scheme for the professional classes were provided under a separate scheme for men and women who wished to learn a skilled trade or occupation, and had been prevented by their war service from starting or finishing their training. This was known as the Vocational Training Scheme and its terms were announced in Parliament in April 1944.³ Just as during the war workers had been

¹ P.L. 120.

² Cmd. 6673.

³ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 398, Col. 2146-7.

trained to do munitions work, so now classes would be set up that would enable those who successfully completed the course to enter a skilled occupation in civilian industry and commerce. The courses would take place at Government Training Centres and Technical Colleges and in appropriate cases in employers' establishments. The occupations for which instruction would be given, the contents of the syllabus and the numbers to be trained over a given period having regard to the prospect of employment were for the most part settled in collaboration with the joint organisations of the industries concerned. By the end of 1944 nineteen schemes, which included all the basic building trades, boot and shoe repairing, furniture making and hair-dressing, had been drawn up, and the courses started in midsummer 1945. Trainees received their tuition free of cost and were paid grants to cover their living expenses with additional allowances for their dependants.¹

(d) INTERRUPTED APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

The fourth scheme, as is apparent from its title the Interrupted Apprenticeship Scheme, was narrower in scope, but within its compass no less important than the other three. Its purpose was to help apprentices, who had been called up before their apprenticeships were completed, to obtain as quickly as possible the additional training they needed in order to become skilled workers, and to give them adequate financial assistance during their training. Briefly, the proposed arrangements were as follows. In order to give each apprentice a time allowance, the unexpired portion of his apprenticeship was to be reduced by not less than one-third or by not less than one-third of his period of military service, whichever was the less, and time which he had spent at his trade while in the Forces was to count as part of his training. The necessary technical instruction might be obtained by taking a full-time course of training at a technical college or by part-time classes sandwiched with employment, and in the former case the trainee was given an allowance to cover his fees and maintenance. For apprentices who served the period of their renewed apprenticeship in an employer's establishment—and this was only open to those over twenty-one—the State would provide a wages allowance equivalent to one-third of the journeyman's rate for the trade, and this would be payable to the apprentice through his employer. These proposals were discussed with the joint bodies of the different industries, and in due course schemes were drawn up and put into successful operation.²

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. 211-212.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 159-161.

(iii)

Resettlement of the Disabled

The resettlement of the able-bodied in civilian life could only begin when their war service was over, but there was another class in the community for which something could and should be done while fighting was still in progress. These were the disabled. In a war of the magnitude of the Second World War it was inevitable that the scale of injury or loss of limbs would be high. The sufferers were not confined to members of the fighting services and Civil Defence; among the civilian population air raids took their toll and in the munitions industries accidents left their permanent mark. The State had a responsibility to these unfortunates. Not only was it incumbent upon it on humanitarian grounds to help each man and woman to overcome their disabilities and to restart work, but it had the further duty of ensuring that, while the war lasted, as many of them as possible were making a contribution to the national effort. In this connection it was necessary to dispel the popular belief that disablement was a bar to many of the normal kinds of industrial employment. Experience had, on the contrary, shown that handicaps were often much less than was supposed, and that large numbers of men and women with physical disabilities could hold down good jobs through their own merits and not simply because of considerate treatment.

The story of the steps taken to train and resettle the disabled effectively begins in the autumn of 1941 when what was known as the Interim Scheme came into operation.¹ Its most important feature was an arrangement reached with the Health Ministries, by which officers of the Ministry of Labour were able to go to hospitals and talk to disabled men and women who were nearing the end of their time in hospital about what they might do upon their discharge. Both the place and the time of these interviews were well conceived. By holding them in hospital at a not too early stage of the medical treatment the Ministry of Labour officers could discuss with the doctor or surgeon the degree and nature of a patient's ultimate disability, and in the light of that judgement they were the better able to guide him in his choice of suitable employment. Some of the disabled were found fit either to go back to their previous jobs or to take up some other full-time work, but in many cases some preliminary training was necessary. Under the scheme two kinds of training were made available. For those who were willing and able to take up some form of munitions work classes, similar to those provided for the able-bodied but modified to suit their needs, were set up in a few Government Training Centres.

¹ P.L. 93/1941.

It was, however, soon found that many of the disabled were quite able to keep pace with the instruction given in the ordinary classes, and from the psychological point of view it was much better to allow them to work side by side with the able-bodied. Secondly, for those whose disabilities made them unsuitable for munitions work classes in a limited range of other occupations were provided mainly in Emergency Training Centres. The Interim Scheme did not pretend to cover the whole problem of the resettlement of disabled persons and, in particular, did not meet the needs of the more seriously incapacitated. At the beginning of 1942, however, the Ministry of Labour was able to bring within the scheme the facilities offered at two residential centres run by voluntary organisations. These were the Queen Elizabeth's College at Leatherhead and the St. Loyes' College at Exeter, at which seventy-five and fifty places respectively were reserved for the Ministry's use.¹

What in retrospect was to be seen as a milestone in the history of the employment of the disabled was the setting up in December 1941 of an inter-departmental committee under the chairmanship of the late George Tomlinson, who was at the time one of the joint Parliamentary Secretaries of the Ministry of Labour. The choice was a happy one. Tomlinson had a deep and genuine sympathy with the physically handicapped and he was untiring in his efforts to win converts to his own conviction that most of the disabled, if properly trained and handled, were fit and able for normal employment. The success with which he propagated this gospel was due in part to his obvious sincerity, and in part to the charm of his Lancastrian speech and humour. The committee's terms of reference related both to the present and to the future. It was asked to make proposals that could be put into immediate effect for the rehabilitation and training of disabled persons not provided for under the Interim Scheme, and to prepare a comprehensive scheme to come into force as soon as practicable after the war was ended. In March 1942 an interim report dealt with the first of these two questions. As a result the scope of vocational training for the disabled was in July 1942 expanded, and those who could not be expected to do work directly connected with the war could in future be trained for any other occupation that was likely to provide them with a reasonable prospect of employment or livelihood during the war.² The final report of the committee was published as a White Paper in January 1943.³ Its main recommendations, which were accepted by the Government, were as follows. All disabled persons, whatever the cause or nature of their disablement, should be eligible under the scheme. To help them on their discharge from hospital to

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. 233-235.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

³ Cmd. 6415.

fit themselves for work, a reconditioning and vocational training service should be set up and administered by the Ministry of Labour. For those unfit for immediate employment or training, facilities for mental and physical rehabilitation should be provided either at special centres or at the existing voluntary institutions. For those who would be able to enter employment after a period of training, courses should be provided to suit their varying requirements. These should include training for technical, executive and clerical jobs, while for industrial occupations the existing classes at Government Training Centres and other institutions should be expanded and adapted to the needs of the disabled. During their period of training the trainees should receive a maintenance allowance for themselves and their dependants. Turning to the question of resettlement, the committee recommended that legislation should be introduced for obliging an employer to engage a prescribed quota of disabled persons, for the provision of certain sheltered occupations for the more seriously disabled, and for the setting up of a register of persons handicapped by disablement. The whole scheme should be regarded as a social service and its cost should be met and recognised as a public obligation.

Following the acceptance of the Tomlinson Report by the Government the Minister of Labour set up an inter-departmental committee, which was given the task of co-ordinating work on the many different aspects of the scheme and of preparing material for the necessary legislation. In the succeeding months there were two interesting developments. First, in order to improve the technique of interviewing and to increase the confidence of the disabled, it was decided to appoint suitable officers from the staff of the Ministry and to train them specially for the work. They were called Disablement Resettlement Officers, and their services were available at each local office and subsequently at each Appointments Office. Secondly, at the end of the year a special centre was set up at Egham to provide rehabilitation by graduated employment for men who had completed hospital treatment and convalescence, but were not yet fit enough to take active employment or to train for any particular occupation. The aim of the centre was, by providing suitable recreational and occupational pursuits, to help a man to recover his physical fitness and his self-confidence, and, when there was a doubt about his ability to return to his previous occupation, to test his suitability for another occupation or for some form of training. The time spent at the centre, which had accommodation for about 200, varied from one to three months. There was no charge for treatment and during their residence the men received free board and lodging allowances.¹

Towards the end of 1943 the Government deemed that the time was

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd 7225), pp. 234 and 236-237.

opportune to give legislative effect to the recommendations in the Tomlinson Report, and on 10th December the Disabled Persons (Employment) Bill was introduced by Tomlinson himself¹—a pleasing recognition of his labours—and received Parliamentary approval on 1st March 1944. In the following August those sections of the Act that dealt with industrial rehabilitation and the provision of sheltered employment for the more seriously disabled were by Order put into operation, and on 1st June 1945 the remaining sections, which included the setting up of a register of disabled persons and the introduction of the quota scheme, came into force. Thus within a few weeks of the end of the European war the interim arrangements were replaced by a permanent resettlement scheme, which came into operation three months later. By that date 426,336 disabled persons had been interviewed either at hospitals or at local offices of the Ministry of Labour with the following broad results.²

July 1941–September 1945

Placed or found work (including trainees)	310,806 ³
No assistance required	67,001
Awaiting placing or training	28,543
Remainder not in touch with local offices	20,979

(iv)

Advice on Resettlement

Such were the plans that had been worked out in readiness to be put into operation when the war with Germany was over, and steps were taken to give them a wide publicity. During the course of a debate in the House of Commons on the White Paper dealing with releases from the Armed Forces the Minister of Labour had promised that a booklet would be prepared for issue to all men and women in the Services, explaining the scheme of release and telling them of their rights and of the facilities that would be available to assist them to resettle themselves in civilian life.⁴ This booklet, which was called 'Release and Resettlement: an Explanation of your Position and Rights', began to be distributed throughout the Forces in May 1945. Early in the same year arrangements were also made for Ministry of Labour officers to give talks on resettlement to Service audiences. These began at units and formations stationed at home, but before long a team of lecturers

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 395, Col. 1260, 10th December 1943.

² *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939–1946* (Cmd 7225), pp. 238–242 and 234.

³ This figure includes in some cases more than one placing.

⁴ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 404, Col. 2030, 15th November 1944.

was sent out on a six months' tour of the Overseas Commands. In addition a series of vocational films were produced to show men and women, while they were still in the Forces, some of the industries and occupations that they might choose to enter upon their release. Lastly, three leaflets—one for each Service—and entitled 'For Your Guidance' provided answers to questions that men and women on leaving their dispersal centres would be likely to ask. They contained useful information on such Service matters as pay and leave, and gave advice, for example, about how to get civilian ration cards and how to apply for employment and national insurance.¹

Assistance to ex-Service men and women towards resettling themselves in civilian life was not, however, confined to the dissemination of information through the organs of publicity. A new service, which would give opportunities for individuals to obtain confidential advice about their private problems, was inaugurated by the Ministry of Labour. This was called the Resettlement Advice Service. Offices of special design and equipment were established in the larger towns throughout the country and were staffed with officers chosen for their personal qualities and their ability to master and expound information on a wide range of subjects. The enquiries that were made were by no means limited to matters of employment and training. They included requests for information about how to get and furnish a house or how to set up a business, and for guidance on how to iron out domestic troubles. It was not unusual for an office to receive at least thirty different kinds of questions in the course of a normal day. To give, if not the right, at any rate a convincing answer must have at times taxed the ingenuity of the staff, but from the numbers using the offices, which in the later months of 1945 rose to an average of thirty thousand a week, it may be inferred that the quality of the service was of a high and satisfying standard.²

Furthermore, the Ministry took steps to adapt its employment services to meet post-war needs, and men and women who wanted advice on the choice of work were encouraged to call at one of the offices. As far as the employment exchanges were concerned there was no need for any substantial changes. They had had a long experience of bringing employers and workers together under both peace and war-time conditions. On the other hand, the Appointments Offices were a comparatively recent creation, and it was recognised that, if they were to become a permanent feature of the post-war employment world, they would have to be developed and strengthened. In the summer of 1943 two committees were set up—each under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey—one of which was to advise on the Further Education and Training Scheme, the other to make recommendations on the future

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd 7225), pp. 153-155.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

status and functions of the Appointments Service. During 1944 the former produced two reports, and as a result of its findings a general handbook was published setting out briefly the training required for separate careers and the prospects of employment in each of them. This was supplemented by a series of pamphlets entitled 'Careers for Men and Women', which gave fuller information than was to be found in the handbook. This literature, which was written in clear and straightforward language, was a great help to men and women and to those who had to advise them in selecting what seemed to be a possible and suitable career.¹

The report of the second committee was published as a White Paper in January 1945 under the title 'Higher Appointments'.² After arguing that the direct provision by the State of a nation-wide employment service in the field of 'Higher Appointments' was indispensable, the committee recommended that this should be based upon the Appointments Department of the Ministry of Labour. If, however, this service was to fulfil its purposes, it would have to be of the highest quality. It should, therefore, be concentrated in a small number of offices in the larger cities of the country with the London office playing a major rôle in handling the most highly qualified applicants. Furthermore, it would have to be staffed with administrative and technical officers of the right calibre and standing, many of whom would have to be recruited from outside the Civil Service. Turning to the functions of the service the committee classified them under two main headings. There should be an employment service, which would help employers to fill their vacancies and applicants to obtain the posts best suited to their capacity. There should also be a careers advice service, of which the chief feature would be a private and confidential interview at which an experienced officer would discuss with an applicant the type of employment for which he seemed to be best suited. This was highly specialised work and would call for staff who had been trained in the latest methods of vocational guidance and occupational analysis, advocated by psychologists and successfully tried out by the Services in the selection of their personnel.

Although some of the recommendations about the staffing of the Appointments Offices were not accepted by the Minister of Labour, the advice of the committee about the lines on which the work of the service should be developed was substantially adopted. In the result the Appointments Offices became not only an effective employment agency, but were also able to offer a careers advice service, scientifically planned and sympathetically run. It was an experiment which in the immediate post-war years at any rate was justified by the results.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

² *Cmd.* 6576.

APPENDIX II

Scheme for Releases from the Services

In June and July 1943 no fewer than eight memoranda were submitted by Ministers to the War Cabinet on the subject of partial demobilisation in the interim period between the end of the German and the end of the Japanese war. In them various suggestions were also made on what would be the most appropriate machinery for drawing up a scheme of orderly releases. On 21st July the Prime Minister summarised the position. 'We have planned hitherto for a complete demobilisation on the basis of age and length of service. The two-stage ending of the war calls for a new alternative plan for the comprehensive re-shaping of our military manpower, in such a way that all will recognise that it is as fair as may be between man and man, military needs being prime and predominant.' On the method by which this enquiry should be conducted he favoured the establishment of a Standing Committee on demobilisation problems under a Ministerial chairman, whose duty would be to re-examine the broad lines of the existing scheme of demobilisation. When the report of the Committee was received, then a decision could be taken whether it or some other committee should have the responsibility of settling the criteria to be adopted in granting prior releases, where this was essential to a rapid revival of peace-time production. Subsequently on 4th August 1943 the War Cabinet expressed general agreement with the Prime Minister's memorandum, and appointed a committee to carry out a general survey of demobilisation plans on the basis of a two-stage ending for the war. The committee consisted of a number of Parliamentary Secretaries under the chairmanship of Sir William (later Earl) Jowitt, Minister without Portfolio.

On 22nd November 1943 the Demobilisation Committee submitted its Report, and its main findings were as follows:

- (1) The principle that releases should for the most part be on the basis of age and length of service was generally endorsed.
- (2) Until the requirements of a separate war against Japan had been more fully examined, no considerable demobilisation of the Navy and the Air Force after the end of the German war was anticipated. As for the Army, the Committee had been advised to proceed on the working hypothesis that demobilisation would not begin for three months after the European war was over, and then at the rate of half a million in each successive period of six months. This slow rate would be disappointing to the Forces, and it was suggested that three months' furlough on full pay should be granted to each man on conclusion of his service in the Forces.
- (3) Three types of cases should be considered for priority of release on occupational grounds:

- (a) Individuals essential to preparatory work involved in restarting or expanding civil production;
 - (b) Pivotal men needed for actual production;
 - (c) Occupational groups of exceptional importance to reconstruction, such as coal-miners, builders, teachers and police.
- (4) Married men and widowers with one or more dependent children should be treated for demobilisation as if they were five years older.
- (5) A tour of service in the Army overseas longer than twelve months, if still current at the time when hostilities in Europe ended, should be counted on a higher rate in the age and service formula—on the basis that each two months spent overseas should be the equivalent of one and a half years of age.

These proposals came in for some vigorous criticism on the following lines:

- (a) The term 'demobilisation' was associated in people's minds with the end of the war and should not be applied to releases before the war with Japan was over.
- (b) On the question of block releases, numbers of men had been compulsorily directed during the war from one industry to another as, for example, from building to steel, and if a man who had been so directed later joined the Army, he would be shown in the Army records as having come from the steel industry. Therefore, a system of block releases based on Army records was likely to give rise to grievances.
- (c) There were serious difficulties in a scheme that gave preference for overseas service only to men who were actually overseas at the time when the war with Germany came to an end. What about the divisions which had been all through the African campaign and had recently been brought home?
- (d) The best plan would be to release as quickly as possible from the Forces the total number of men who could be spared. Thereafter, the responsibility of allocating them to jobs in which they were most needed should lie with the Ministry of Labour.

Counter proposals put forward by the Ministry of Labour were that:

- (1) Demobilisation should not begin till the end of the Japanese war. After the German war the Armed Forces should release men no longer required, but all such men should be placed on the Reserve and be liable to recall.
- (2) The basis of releases should be age and length of service. In this transitional period it should not be necessary to give any advantage to marriage or overseas service, although both might have to be taken into account when final demobilisation started.
- (3) There should be a limited release of specialists irrespective of age and length of service, but apart from that there should be no block releases.

- (4) Powers to direct labour should be retained until the end of the Japanese war, so that workers could be deployed where they were most required.

When this question was considered by the War Cabinet in December 1943, the policy embodied in the Ministry of Labour's proposals was generally approved, but some doubts were expressed about the wisdom of applying directions to men released from the Forces on age and length of service. The Minister was, accordingly, asked to examine the question further with the Service Ministers.

On 2nd February the Minister of Labour submitted his revised views. The proposals that he made were the basis of the scheme which was ultimately put into operation, and which has been described in the foregoing chapter. The War Cabinet gave its general approval, and outstanding points were left to be examined by a committee under one of the Joint Parliamentary Secretaries of the Ministry of Labour. The draft of a White Paper was presented on 16th March 1944, and after some revision was finally approved and issued on 22nd September 1944.¹

¹ See above pp. 259-261.

PART II

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE WAR EFFORT

IN THE STORY of the mobilisation of the country the part played by women is a chapter of outstanding interest and importance. The novelty of the experiment is matched by the greatness of the achievement. Thousands of women who had not previously thought of seeking employment swelled the ranks of the industrial workers, or found their way into the Auxiliary Services, Civil Defence, hospitals or the Land Army. Thousands more were transferred from their customary jobs to fill shells or make parts of aircraft. Such an upheaval of the normal way of life was bound to be accompanied by hardship. If for some of the younger women life in the Services was an adventure, for others the necessity to leave home, live in hostels, and work amid the unfamiliar noise of a factory entailed considerable personal sacrifices. For the married women it was often a matter of doing two jobs—looking after their husbands and homes and still finding time for some hours in a workshop, behind a counter or on a bus.

This transformation was, of course, a gradual process. In the early days of the war the unparalleled extent to which women would have to be drawn into the war machine was not foreseen; it looked as if voluntary offers of service would more than suffice to meet the demands that would arise. But when the implications of the struggle had been realised, it was apparent that nothing short of the total mobilisation of the womanpower of the country would avail, if victory were ultimately to be won. This could not be left to patriotic volunteering. On such a system neither would the required numbers have been forthcoming nor would the burdens have been equitably distributed. Moreover, appeals for volunteers might well result in more women coming forward than there were yet jobs to which they could be immediately assigned, with the result that those who were disappointed would feel that their offers of service had been made in vain and that they were not wanted. Timing was the essential condition of success, and this could only be achieved if control were firmly exercised by the Government. There were, moreover, advantages in treating women as far as practicable in the same way as men. The decision to make them subject to compulsory powers was, however, taken by the Government with considerable reluctance; but when the reasons for it were explained to the country, it was widely accepted as the only practical course. Many

women too seem to have welcomed the knowledge that, instead of having to make up their own minds when and where they should offer to do something to help the war effort, they would be called when required and, after a sympathetic consideration of their particular circumstances, would be offered work that they might expect to be able to do. They were under no illusions that in the end they might be ordered to take up some specific form of employment, but the number of cases in which they held out until directions were issued was small when compared with the wide willingness to accept the jobs they were offered. Thus the mobilisation of womanpower was achieved largely in a voluntary spirit inside a framework of compulsion. This was a great tribute to the unselfish determination of the women of the country; it was also a reflection of the skill and sympathy with which the interviewing officers of the Ministry of Labour carried out their duties, which were always onerous and sometimes unpalatable.

The readiness of women to make munitions or perform other war-time services could not, however, alone have produced the required result. It was also essential that employers should believe in their competence. This entailed what was little short of a revolutionary change of heart. In peace-time engineering had been regarded as primarily a men's preserve and, when with the chronic shortage of skilled workers employers with the consent of the unions concerned had been obliged to introduce dilution, it was to male labour that they looked to carry out the process. Now that men were so scarce it was being suggested that there was a wide variety of jobs that women, if given short training, could perform with equal proficiency. The idea was at first received with considerable scepticism but, with carefully prepared publicity and with the pioneering example of firms who had successfully made the experiment, the new proposition was gradually accepted as a practical necessity. The difficulties that employers had to overcome should not, however, be underestimated. Shifts had to be arranged to suit the hours for which women could be expected to work. Training courses had to be adapted to their inexperience, and provision made for their personal necessities and comfort. Moreover, as the demand for mobile labour increased, employers were not infrequently called upon to give up the younger women whom they had trained and take on as substitutes older women, sometimes as part-time workers. This involved further modifications in methods of production and in hours of work and the restarting of training for workers, who by reason of their age could hardly be expected to acquire the necessary knowledge as quickly as the younger women whom they were replacing. That, in spite of these changes in personnel, production and output maintained a high and steady level reflects the time and trouble that employers and experienced workers alike took to making the fresh entrants at home in their new work and surroundings.

Whether it was the resourcefulness of firms or the surprising adaptability of the new workers that should receive the greater praise, it is certain that neither alone could have made the experiment the signal success it proved.

(i)

The Growing Demands for Women Workers

During the first year of the war the need for any special measures to augment the supply of female labour did not arise. There were abundant reserves of women occupied only at home, and among those already in industry there was substantial unemployment. The problem was to stimulate demand rather than to increase the supply of potential workers. This state of affairs was due to a variety of reasons. With the outbreak of war there was an inevitable curtailment of some of the luxury trades and services, such as catering and entertainment, which gave employment to considerable numbers of women. For those who were in consequence rendered idle alternative employment gradually became available when the call-up of men from other sections of less essential industry, such as the distributive trades, created vacancies for which employers were at that time prepared to engage women; but for some months the demand for substitutes fell short of the supply. In the munitions industries opportunities for inexperienced women were slow in developing. This was in part unavoidable. Before unskilled workers could be absorbed in any great numbers, methods of production had to be settled and an adequate supply of skilled men obtained. But it was also in part due to a slowness of industry to realise that dilution on an extensive scale would be necessary, and that women were no less competent than men to carry out some of the less skilled processes. It was not till May 1940 that an agreement was reached between the two sides of the engineering industry to employ women as 'dilutees'.¹ Another possible source of employment for at least the younger women was the Auxiliary Services, but in the early months of the war only small numbers were recruited.² The build-up of the Armed Forces was the major concern of the Service departments, and as yet the need for large numbers of women organised on a military basis as a means of setting men free for combatant duties, if it had been envisaged as a possibility, was not regarded as a pressing matter.

At July 1940 the numbers of women in insured employment had in

¹ For the text of the agreement dated 22nd May 1940 see the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, June 1940, p. 159.

² From September 1939 to December 1940 intake into the A.T.S. was 31,960 and into the W.A.A.F. 14,672 whilst outflow was 13,212 and 3,636 respectively, making a net intake for the first 16 months of the war of less than 30,000.

the course of a year only grown by 322,000. This increase was divided in almost equal proportions between the munitions and other essential industries. In the group of less essential industries¹ the total was unchanged, decreases in the luxury trades being offset by replacements of men in other industries and services. The expansion of the labour force of women had hardly begun.

In December 1940 it was first clearly recognised that the need would arise to call upon the women of the country to take a full share in meeting the requirements of the war programme. There was—as Sir William Beveridge, the chairman of the Manpower Requirements Committee, emphasised—a famine of male workers and maximum national effort could only be achieved, if women were brought in at every point where substitution was possible.² This would imply two things—an extensive transfer of women from less essential work to occupations more directly connected with the war, and the bringing into the labour market of vast numbers not at present gainfully employed. The anticipated expansion of the munitions industries would create a rapidly rising demand for inexperienced labour and, with the continuing call-up of men for the Forces and the transfer of others to munitions, large numbers of women would be wanted to take their places. The total requirements were estimated at little less than 2,000,000 additional female workers.

But staggering as these budget proposals were, they did not represent the full difficulties of the coming task. The demands for labour in the war industries were not equally distributed throughout the country. The Midlands and North West Regions were flooded with contracts whose labour requirements were far in excess of the supply of labour that those areas could provide, whereas other regions, such as Scotland and Wales, with reserves of womanpower were left scantily furnished with contracts. It was this unequal distribution of war production that necessitated a wide transfer of women from one part of the country to another, with all the political and social inconveniences that such action involved. Moreover, the supply of women who could be fairly expected to leave their homes and migrate to other and often distant parts of the country was broadly confined to those who were unmarried or had no household responsibilities. From 1941 onwards the hunt for mobile women went on continuously, and schemes had to be devised by the Ministry of Labour for extracting them from employment wheresoever immobile women were available to take their places, and for sending them to firms in congested or isolated areas. No doubt transferences of labour on a considerable scale were almost inevitable; but the task would have been lightened and the hardship imposed on

¹ For convenience classifications of industries which were subsequently used have been employed. See above p. 175.

² See above pp. 101-104.

women sensibly mitigated if the location of industry had from the first taken a somewhat different course.

Consistently with the principle of substituting women for men wherever practicable, the Manpower Requirements Committee also proposed an expansion of the Auxiliary Services so that their members could release as many men as possible in the Armed Forces for active and combatant duties. Of the three Women's Services the A.T.S. because of the size of the Army would require the largest intake of recruits, and the necessity for quick action was soon brought home to the War Office. The demands of the Army for men had been continuously growing and had now reached a total that was out of proportion to the rate at which the requisite equipment could be provided. In March 1941, accordingly, the Prime Minister decided, as we saw earlier, to set a ceiling to the strength of the Army and directed the War Office to make whatever adjustments and experiments might be necessary to ensure that the numbers it had received were being used to the best advantage.¹ This gave the required impetus to plans for the expansion of the A.T.S., and a few weeks later the Secretary of State for War, when addressing the Women's Consultative Committee,² made it clear that it was to a strengthened A.T.S. that he was looking to counteract the cuts in the allocation of men which he had been obliged to accept. In its budget the Manpower Requirements Committee had forecast the collective requirements of the three Auxiliary Services up to the end of 1941 at a net increase of 75,000, but in the new situation the figure was more than doubled, that of the A.T.S. alone being put at 100,000. As compared with the estimated requirements of industry even these enhanced figures might appear relatively modest, but wastage in the three Services had been running high—in the A.T.S. it was forty per cent.³—and, if it were to continue at this rate, intake would have to be far in excess of the numbers actually required. Moreover, the recruits would, as matters then stood, have to be volunteers and for the most part at any rate young and mobile. The Service departments had, therefore, two problems to resolve: how to obtain enough recruits, and how to keep them when they had been accepted. Of the two the latter was the more difficult and pressing. After a number of alternatives had been discussed and rejected, in April 1941 the Defence (Women's Forces) Regulations 1941⁴ were made, under which the Women's Services became part of the Armed Forces of the Crown, with the proviso that the extent to which the Discipline Acts of the three Services should apply to the Women's Corps should be left to the determination of the Board of

¹ See above pp. 106 and 162.

² See below pp. 293-294.

³ See p. 281n². See further Statistical Appendix, Table IV.

⁴ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 370, Col. 1699-1700. S. R. & O. 1941, No. 581.

Admiralty, the Army and Air Councils respectively.¹ These regulations, which in intention were comparable to the Essential Work Order, prevented a member of the Auxiliary Services from leaving at her own free will, and enabled the authorities to introduce the necessary measures of discipline. It was further hoped that the attraction of the wider range of duties, which were now open to members of the Services, would more than offset the loss of potential volunteers, who might be discouraged from joining by the stricter disciplinary control that was now to be exercised.

THE REGISTRATION FOR EMPLOYMENT ORDER, MARCH 1941

The prospect of finding the vast numbers of women which the Manpower Requirements Committee had forecast would be required was clearly remote, if reliance continued to be placed on publicity to attract voluntary offers of service. It was essential to determine the available sources of supply, to identify the women who could be brought into employment or the Services, and to make arrangements for transferring others from occupations of declining importance to work more closely associated with the war programme. In March 1941 two significant developments were initiated. A Registration for Employment Order for women was made, by which women could be called upon to register by their age groups,² and in the following month the first registration covering those born in 1920 was held.³ About the same time schemes for the concentration of civilian industries were launched, from which it was hoped that considerable numbers of women would be released for transfer to the munitions industries. With a view to ensuring that labour would be released where it could be readily reabsorbed for war work and as a guide to the production departments in determining the districts where contracts should or should not be placed, the Ministry of Labour produced a map of the country in which the different local office areas were given distinctive colours, on the model of traffic light signals, indicating where labour was in dangerously short supply, could about match demands, or was comparatively easy.⁴ These maps, which were amended from time to time to correspond with changes in the supply and demand situation, were a convenient method of getting a bird's eye view of the geographical distribution of available womanpower and, as we shall see later in this chapter, became the basis on which the Ministry of Labour formulated its plans for the

¹ The W.R.N.S. was not made subject to the Discipline Acts.

² S. R. & O. 1941, No. 368, 15th March 1941. Statistics of registrations are given in the Statistical Appendix, Table VII.

³ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd 7225), Appendix III, p. 337.

⁴ See above p. 148.

allocation of mobile women. Lastly, as an incentive to women to acquire some knowledge of engineering processes before they actually took up such employment, it was decided at the beginning of the year to start classes of instruction for women at Government Training Centres, which had previously only catered for men.¹

In August 1941 the progress that had been made in reaching the estimated requirements was reviewed and the picture was not altogether reassuring. The best feature was an increase of over half a million women in munitions representing about fifty per cent. of the estimated requirement, but over industry as a whole the expansion achieved was less than a third of the budgeted total.² The yield from registrations under the Registration for Employment Order had been disappointing. Interviewing, following upon registrations, had been limited to women who were either unoccupied or who had household responsibilities or who were in unpaid or part-time paid employment; those in reserved occupations or employed with firms which were substantially engaged on Government contracts—and these represented a high percentage of the young registrants—had been left undisturbed. Nor had the national registrations done much to ease the acute labour shortages in the Midlands and North West Regions. Moreover, the expectation that from among the registrants considerable numbers would volunteer for the Women's Services had not materialised, largely because so many were already doing some other form of war work.

It was reckoned that for the rest of the year intake to the A.T.S. and the W.A.A.F. would have to be at the high rate of 30,000 a month, and responsibility for obtaining the recruits was transferred from the Service departments to the Ministry of Labour. Looking ahead to June 1942 the forecast of requirements was put at 460,000 women for munitions, 356,000 for the Services, and 106,000 for Civil Defence and hospitals. A number of immediate decisions were taken. Registrations under the Registration for Employment Order were to be held at fortnightly intervals, so that by the end of the year all women between the ages of twenty and thirty would have been registered. A list of vital war work was drawn up from which registered women would be required to select their employment, and those who were mobile were to be treated as available for transfer to scarcity labour areas. To increase the supply of women for munitions, schemes were developed for withdrawing those, especially between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, who were in other less important industries and services. Before, however, this could be put into operation it was felt necessary to consult the employers concerned, who after the loss of men for the Armed Forces were reluctant to be robbed of the young women whom

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd 7225), p. 102.

² See above pp. 102-103.

they had taken on as replacements. In the end separate arrangements were settled with a large number of professions, trades and services, under which the withdrawal of what were called pivotal workers was often made subject to the prior provision of substitutes. In retrospect it may seem as if the detailed schemes were unnecessarily elaborate, that too much respect was paid to employers' representations, and that, if the extraction had been left to the regional and local offices, more younger women could have been obtained at the cost of only temporary dissatisfaction among employers. On the other hand, at the time at which the negotiations took place it was desirable to smooth the pathway of compulsion and, if the objections of employers could be met in advance, the withdrawals of those female workers that had been agreed would be effected much more readily and without the delay that subsequent protests would have entailed. It was a choice between getting a limited number with the assurance of goodwill, and overriding opposition with the uncertain prospect of higher numerical results. Moreover, if the initial stages were sympathetically handled, it would be easier—as events showed—to make more intensive demands later upon employers, when public opinion had been educated to accept the sacrifices that the war was imposing.

THE NATIONAL SERVICE (NO. 2) ACT, DECEMBER 1941

In the late autumn of 1941 the situation was again causing anxiety. Intake to the Services was far short of the 30,000 a month that it had been hoped to reach. Appeals to women to join up had met with a disappointing response. Improvements in rates of pay and a wider and more attractive range of duties had not proved the desired stimulant to recruiting. It was inescapable that volunteering would no longer suffice. The proposal, however, to introduce conscription was, as we have seen, at first vigorously opposed by Ministers and especially by the Prime Minister himself. Among the younger age classes that would be required to register there would be many, it was pointed out, who would not be suited to Service conditions and it would be altogether wrong to force them to enrol. Moreover, men in the Forces might well protest if their womenfolk were to be conscripted. It was only when they were convinced that there was no other practical alternative that first the Minister of Labour and later the Prime Minister were converted to the immediate need for the introduction of compulsion, and in December 1941 the National Service (No. 2) Act was passed. As it was, the Act contained a number of significant safeguards. Only unmarried women and childless widows between the ages of twenty and thirty were made liable; only volunteers were to be posted to combatant duties and, most important of all, each woman when she registered was to be given the right to choose whether she would go

into one of the Services or into industry or Civil Defence. If no preference was expressed, then for the time being at any rate she would be placed in industry.¹ Thus, although the young single women were made liable to be conscripted, in fact only those among them who opted for one of the Services were obliged to join up.

THE CONTROL OF ENGAGEMENT ORDER, JANUARY 1942

The schemes that had been devised to provide more women for the munitions industries were also not working satisfactorily. The release of useful labour from the concentration schemes had been much smaller than was expected. Not infrequently women had already left the firms scheduled for closing, and had either gone home or found other employment on their own before the Ministry of Labour had been able to interview them and place them in vacancies which it was of urgent importance to fill. In other cases the women who became available were not suitable for work in munitions factories. Moreover—and this applied in general to registrants under the Registration for Employment Order—there was no power, except where firms had been scheduled under the Essential Work Order, to ensure that women who had been placed by a local office remained in that employment. It was also an anomaly that, whereas employers in the engineering industries were obliged to come to an employment exchange for their female workers, those in the wide range of less essential industries and services were at liberty to engage such women as were willing to work for them. Clearly the time was ripe for the introduction of more effective controls over the movement of women, and in January 1942 a new Order was made.² This was the Control of Engagement Order, and under it women between the ages of twenty and thirty—other than those with children under fourteen living with them—were with some exceptions obliged to obtain their employment through an employment exchange or an agency approved for the purpose by the Ministry of Labour.³ Thus the local officers of the Ministry were put in a position in which they could more effectively regulate the distribution of women in those age classes which were the best source of supply. The Order might with advantage have been made a year earlier.

¹ Some confusion in the minds of women and their employers resulted from the different procedure applied to industrial optants under the National Service Act as compared with women under the Registration for Employment Order. Whereas the former automatically received a written direction against which their only means of appeal was an application on grounds of personal hardship to a Hardship Committee, the women registered under the Registration for Employment Order could appeal against a direction to a Local Appeal Board and it was normal for the National Service officer to accept its ruling. This anomaly was corrected in September 1943, when it was decided that National Service Act women being considered for industry should be dealt with under a procedure similar to that of the Registration for Employment Order.

² The Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order, S. R. & O. 1942, No. 100, 22nd January 1942.

³ The Order provided for the issue of permits to individual women enabling them to obtain specified employment by their own efforts.

(ii)

The Problem of Mobility

In March 1942 a further analysis was made of the extent to which current measures were producing the required results. In the munitions industries demands had so far been met, but the supply of women was beginning to run short. The chief anxiety was the shortage of mobile women. Women had now been registered up to the age of 37, but in the higher age groups married women naturally predominated. Many of them had children under fourteen living with them and were in consequence outside the scope of the Order, while others had household responsibilities which made it impossible for them to work away from their home areas. If more mobile women were to be obtained, more younger women would have to be brought into the field. It was, accordingly, decided in April 1942 to register the 19-year-olds and make them available for transfer to employment in other parts of the country. As the movement of girls from their homes might arouse parental misgivings, assurances were given and special care was taken that they would only be sent to vacancies where the Ministry of Labour was satisfied that there were good working conditions and that the arrangements for their housing and comfort were satisfactory. On these conditions no opposition was made to the proposal by the Women's Consultative Committee, the organ used by the Minister to obtain a representative women's opinion.¹ In Scotland, however, where the flame of nationalist feeling was being fanned, it was agreed that girls should not be sent to England until they had reached the age of 20. At the end of June the 1923 class, some of which were only 18½, was called upon to register, but it was decided that no girl would be required to work outside her home area until she was 19. Meanwhile more intensive measures were taken to withdraw mobile women from less important employment, and some of the earlier arrangements made with particular industries and services, which had safeguarded their retention, were modified.

In the recruitment for the Women's Services things were going less well. The National Service Act was not yielding the required numbers. Of those who had registered only about twenty-seven per cent. had opted for the Services, and in that total a considerable proportion were already in reserved occupations or were granted deferment of their call-up. Moreover, the new procedure had got off to a bad start. With the improbability that air attacks would be resumed on the country on a scale comparable to that of 1940-41, the Prime Minister had directed that the existing arrangements for the defence of the country

¹ See below p. 293.

against air attack could be substantially modified.¹ This involved the re-deployment of military personnel and the War Office, which had been the protagonist for the introduction of conscription for women, had in January 1942 actually closed down on any intake of conscripts into the A.T.S. This, it subsequently transpired when the policy was challenged by the Ministry of Labour, was only intended to be a temporary precaution, but it was not till March that the first of the conscripts were enrolled in the A.T.S. Meanwhile volunteering continued, but with the passing of the National Service (No. 2) Act which, it was thought, would produce the required numbers, propaganda had been damped down.

It was clear in June that, unless more vigorous measures were taken, there would be a serious short-fall in the desired strength of the Women's Services, and the following action was approved. All women in the 1920-21 class were to be withdrawn from their present employment, unless they were in reserved occupations. This meant the cancellation of all deferments. Secondly, the National Service Act was to be extended to women born in the first half of 1922 on the analogy of what had already been done under the Registration for Employment Order, and of future registrants under the Act² those who expressed no option were to go into the Services with the exception—and this was a concession to the Ministry of Aircraft Production—of those living in 'scarlet' areas where most of the aircraft factories were situated. Lastly, a new publicity drive should be made to get women to volunteer as cooks and drivers, for whom the W.A.A.F. and the A.T.S. had large unsatisfied demands. While these decisions were calculated to improve the chances of the Women's Services of obtaining something like their requirements, it was at the expense of reducing the number of mobile women available for industry. The greatest care had in consequence to be taken to ensure that mobile women in industry were being used to the fullest possible advantage, and the policy of substituting immobile women where they were available was vigorously pressed forward. Furthermore, with a view to increasing the supply of immobile women sterner standards were applied in the interviewing of women with household responsibilities, who had registered under the Registration for Employment Order. If perhaps few of them would be available for full-time work, many of them might be able to take on part-time jobs. With the same object women between the ages of forty-one and forty-six were in the latter half of 1942 required to register under the Registration for Employment Order. From this time onwards emphasis was to be upon the practicability of employing part-timers as a means of releasing women for full-time jobs.

¹ See above pp.178-179.

² For the purposes of the National Service Acts, use was made of the registrations effected under the Registration for Employment Order.

Meanwhile the autumn survey of the Ministry of Labour covering the twelve months from July 1942 to June 1943 had become available, and the Lord President, who was asked to examine its implications, extended the period under review to the end of 1943. It was abundantly clear that there was no possibility of finding enough women to meet the estimated requirements of the Auxiliary Services and the munitions industries, and the problem was to decide on the incidence of the cuts that would have to be made. Against the demands of the Services for 303,000 and of the munitions industries for 496,000 more women the Lord President recommended that the allocations should be 220,000 and 412,000 respectively. These suggestions were not, however, accepted by the Prime Minister. In the light of the strategic situation he insisted that the output of aircraft must have precedence over all other claims upon manpower. Accordingly he proposed, and the War Cabinet agreed, that the requirements of the Auxiliary Services should be cut to 168,000 and the allocation to the end of 1943 should be fixed at 21,000 for the W.R.N.S., 80,000 for the A.T.S. and 67,000 for the W.A.A.F. As both the A.T.S. and the W.A.A.F. had by the end of 1942 already received a substantial proportion of this revised allocation, the numbers they were left to recruit during 1943 were no more than 26,000 and 18,500 respectively. This would do little more than replace wastage, and by mid-summer 1943 each of the two Services had reached its peak strength. With the W.R.N.S. it was different. It was the smallest of the three Services and had expanded at a lower proportionate rate than either of the other two. Its moderate requirements had enabled it to make a discriminating choice of the volunteers who offered their services and from whom alone it had enrolled its members. But with the development of plans for combined operations in preparation for the invasion of Europe, the time was now ripe for increasing the size of the Service. Finally, it was agreed that in 1943 it should be entitled to obtain an additional 36,000 women—15,000 more than the Prime Minister had proposed. This rise was conditional upon the Admiralty making a proportionate reduction in its requirements for shipyard labour. The W.R.N.S. continued to expand in 1944, and it was not until September of that year that it reached its maximum strength.¹

Thus in 1943 the Women's Services dropped into the background in the competition for mobile women. No more registrations under the National Service Act took place and from July until the end of the year no new volunteers were enrolled.² All efforts were concentrated on building up the labour force of aircraft manufacture, which together with a number of other products of outstanding importance in the war

¹ See Statistical Appendix, Table III.

² Volunteering was re-opened to girls between the ages of 17½ and 19 in January 1944. See above p. 227.

programme was given a super-priority for obtaining the workers it required. The satisfaction of these demands, which in many cases meant the provision of mobile women, placed a severe strain upon the Ministry of Labour machine. The policy of substituting immobile for mobile women was pressed forward and was applied not only to munitions, but to every section of industry where there were younger women still available for transfer. With the supply of immobile women who could work full time rapidly drying up, the practicability of making do with part-timers was exploited to the full. During 1942 part-time work had been on a voluntary basis, but at the end of the year, with the need to ensure that labour was being used economically and to the best advantage, the question was raised whether women available for part-time work should not now be made subject to directions. It was something of an anomaly that immobile women, who on interview were judged able to do a full day's work, should be obliged to take the jobs they were offered, whereas those who were classified as suitable only for part-time work should be free to choose their own employment and leave it without the knowledge of the employment exchange. The matter was discussed at some length with the Women's Consultative Committee and the trade unions, and on the understanding that part-timers would only be directed to employment where the wages were satisfactory the proposal was accepted. This was given legal force by the Control of Engagement (Directed Persons) Order, which was made in April 1943.¹ From this date the number of women in part-time employment continued to increase and by mid-summer 1944 had reached a total of 900,000.²

Outside the industrial field the hospitals and nursing services were calling out for more staff. Nurses were scarce and, with the prospect of heavy fighting, it was imperative to increase their number. After consultation with the nursing organisations, the hospitals and local authorities, steps were taken by the Ministry of Labour, as part of its responsibility for manpower, to deal with the problem. In February 1943 a National Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives was established and drew up a list of the various types of nursing employment, which it arranged in order of importance. Two months later all nurses and midwives were required to register, and Nursing Appointments Offices were opened to stimulate recruitment and act as placing agencies.³ A further step was taken in September 1943 when the Control of Engagement Order was applied to nurses and midwives. In future, those between the ages of 18 and 40 were obliged to obtain their employment through a Nursing Appointments Office, and in consequence the Ministry of Labour was able to

¹ S. R. & O. 1943, No. 651.

² See the *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd 7225), p. 65.

³ See below pp. 323-324.

exercise a much more effective influence over their distribution. The success which attended these and other measures has been described in another volume of this History.¹

One further development that took place in the autumn of 1943 should be noticed. It was decided to register women up to the age of 51—which was the same upper limit as for men under the National Service Act. It was not expected that this would yield any appreciable numbers who were not already helping the war effort, but it was felt worth while to find out how the women in these older age groups were occupied. This was publicly announced as the main reason for making the additional registrations, and an assurance was given that in no case would a woman who registered be asked to work away from her home area. Perhaps the most satisfactory outcome of the registrations was the stimulus which it gave to 10,000 women to volunteer for full-time employment.

By the end of 1943 the labour requirements of the Ministry of Aircraft Production had been so fully met that the super-priority given to aircraft firms could be withdrawn. This achievement was also the culmination of the mobilisation of womanpower.

(iii)

The Ministry of Labour Machine

This chapter may fittingly end with a short review of the organisation that was set up to plan and administer the mobilisation of womanpower, and of the more important circulars issued to local offices as a guide to them in their day-to-day work.

It was on the whole fortunate that the decisions to apply varying degrees of obligation to women to undertake war work were all made when Mr. Bevin was Minister of Labour. His earlier career as a trade union leader had given him an unrivalled knowledge of the mentality of the working classes, and out of this had grown an understanding sympathy with their problems and prejudices. When, therefore, as Minister of Labour he had to call upon their women for special efforts and sacrifices, his intuition of what their probable reactions would be was a guide to the way in which the demands should be framed and executed. He had an instinctive distaste for compulsion and it may be, despite his confidence in his own sense of timing, that he delayed unduly in accepting its necessity. His slow conversion had, however, this advantage that once the decision was made he devoted his attention to seeing that it was interpreted with every possible consideration for the women concerned. At the headquarters of the Ministry a special section was established to handle all administrative questions

¹ S. M. Ferguson and H. Fitzgerald: *Studies in the Social Services*, Chapter IX.

arising out of the Registration for Employment Order and later the National Service (No. 2) Act. This was a clear recognition that, although the obligations that were being placed upon women were similar to those imposed upon men, there were considerations for the most part of a personal and domestic character which made the position of women different from that of men, and to which full weight would have to be given when issuing instructions on the degree of stringency with which compulsion should be applied. Moreover, as steps would have to be taken not only to increase the supply of women but to withdraw those in less important posts and transfer them to war work, special approaches would, it was recognised, have to be made to industries and services, and suitable literature prepared to educate the public on the potential capabilities of women for what was normally regarded as men's work.

To assist him in this difficult task the Minister in March 1941 set up a Women's Consultative Committee. The Committee, which met twice a month under the chairmanship of one of the Parliamentary Secretaries of the Ministry, had a membership of nine, including three Members of Parliament and two trade unionists, all of whom were appointed in a personal capacity. It became the practice to consult the Committee on all important questions of policy affecting women before decisions were taken. Thus—to take a few examples—when at different times proposals to introduce conscription, to register girls of nineteen and make them available for transfer to employment away from their homes, and to apply directions to part-time workers were under consideration, the advice of the Committee on the probable public reactions was sought and considered. Again, with a view to ensuring that the demands made on women registered under the Registration for Employment Order were in all the circumstances fair, the Committee was asked what in its judgement would be the proper way to handle such groups of women as wives with husbands serving in the Armed Forces, women recently widowed, students and Sisters of Religion. The Committee was taken fully into confidence on all questions and no public statement was made of the nature of its advice on the various matters referred to it. The informality of the proceedings made for a free and honest exchange of opinions, and the members of the Committee felt that their advice was fully used in the making and implementing of policy. The Committee gave much time and thought to the needs of various industries and services, and on occasions had conferences with representatives of the Women's Services and employers' organisations with a view to removing obstacles to recruitment. Lastly, recognising the importance of good publicity in educating the public on the part which women could play in the war effort, it enlisted the co-operation of women's organisations throughout the country, and assisted the Ministry in arranging a

national conference of these bodies, which took place in the Albert Hall in September 1942 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Labour.

But wise as it was to create a new administrative section to carry out these important duties and to set up a consultative committee on women's problems, it was upon the way that women were treated when they came to be interviewed after registration that the work of the Ministry would be mainly judged. It was the view of the Minister and his advisers—which not all women would have shared—that women who were being asked or required to take some form of employment would respond more willingly, if they knew they could talk over their problems with one of their own sex. It was, accordingly, decided to appoint women officers to conduct interviews both at the local offices where women would register under the Registration for Employment Order and at the District Manpower Boards which would deal with those to whom the National Service Act applied. As there were insufficient permanent civil servants to carry out these extensive duties, considerable numbers of women, selected on their previous experience in handling women whether in industry or in voluntary organisations, were taken on by the Ministry of Labour in a temporary capacity. Moreover, when the time came for older women to be registered, care was taken to ensure that they would be interviewed by an officer who was not markedly junior to them in age. Special panels composed of women who were themselves householders were also set up to which the local offices could refer women with household responsibilities, when they were in doubt after interviewing them whether it would be fair to require them to take either a full-time or a part-time job. Similarly, women were added to the Local Appeal Boards and to the conscientious objectors' Tribunals, and one of them was regularly present when a woman applicant's case was being considered. This practice of using women as the Minister's agents in putting into effect his plans for the mobilisation of womanpower for the most part at any rate worked out well. Inevitably some complaints were made about the alleged imperiousness with which some of the younger women officers exercised their temporary authority; but such lapses, where they did occur, could often be in part excused by the unhelpful attitude of the aggrieved registrant. On the whole, in circumstances which put a heavy premium on patience, women officers treated their clients with courtesy, sympathy and perhaps a greater degree of firmness than most men would have had the courage to apply. The value of this last quality was attested by the results that it achieved.

In addition to developing a sound technique of interviewing, it was essential that women officers should have a clear picture of how they should dispose of the registrants who were available for work. If they had more vacancies on their books than there were applicants to fill

them, in what order should they be filled? If, on the other hand, there was a surplus supply of workers in their locality, what arrangements should they try to make for transfers to other districts? To provide answers to these questions the headquarters of the Ministry issued instructions in which the relative importance of different demands was placed in an order of priority, and the ways in which labour should be distributed were defined. The situation was, however, constantly changing. New demands for women would suddenly arise, or serious short-falls would be reported, whether in the Women's Services or, more commonly, in some particular factory or workshop situated in an area where little local labour was available. Plans had accordingly to be adjusted and improvisations devised. The crux of the whole problem was the scarcity of mobile women and, to make matters worse, the order in which the claims of competitors for the limited supply should be met was constantly being altered as the strategic situation changed. Some idea of how the Ministry faced these perplexing problems may perhaps be best given by a quick survey of the more important circulars on the placing of women. This will also show how the range of employment that was offered to registrants was gradually restricted so that their services would be used where they could contribute most effectively to the winning of the war.

When the Registration for Employment Order was made in March 1941, local offices were sent a list of work of national importance and were told that out of it women should be allowed to choose the type of employment to which they were most attracted. The list was a heterogeneous miscellany, and it was soon apparent that the selection that it offered was far too wide. In May when women in the clothing industry were being interviewed, local offices were informed that they should make special efforts to fill vacancies in the Royal Ordnance Factories and that they should use their persuasive powers to obtain volunteers for the A.T.S. By August the need for greater precision was recognised, as the demands that would arise for mobile women began to reveal themselves. A list of what was called vital war work was issued. On the Services side this comprised Civil Defence, nursing, the Land Army and N.A.A.F.I.; and in the industrial field aircraft manufacture, R.O.F.s, radio, tanks and transport. Local offices were instructed that mobile women would be required to take up employment specified in the list: immobile women, on the other hand, where work of this kind was not available in their home areas and they could not be used as substitutes, should be left undisturbed in their present employment, but their position should be kept under constant review. In addition to the vital war work list, which classified industries as a whole, lists of particular establishments to which the Preference Sub-Committee had given first preference began soon afterwards to be circulated. For the most part such first preference vacancies fell within

the scope of the vital war work list; where they did not, they were treated as far as the submission of women was concerned as of equal importance with those within the list.

In November 1941 the Ministry began to make use of its coloured map as the basis of its instructions for the allocation of mobile women, and this practice continued until late in the war. At first the plan was that within each region all mobile women in red, amber and green areas should be transferred to fill vacancies in scarlet areas, while those living in scarlet areas should be used for the same purpose locally. As, however, the total number of available mobile women in some regions would exceed, and in others fall short of, their scarlet area vacancies, it was soon decided to classify regions as demand or supply regions and link them together. Thus, for example, the Midlands—which had the heaviest requirements—was linked with London, the North Midlands and Scotland as supply regions, and it was the duty of these three regions to transfer their surplus mobile women to fill vacancies in scarlet areas in the Midlands. This policy of inter-regional transfers was, as might be expected, not popular with the controllers of supply regions. They pointed out that within their regions they had in areas which were not coloured scarlet a large number of first preference vacancies, but they were debarred from using their young mobile women for this purpose because they had to export them to fill vacancies in scarlet areas in other regions. These complaints, which had some substance, were in part met by restricting to those coloured amber and green the areas from which mobile women had to be transferred. In future, a red area was defined as one in which there were urgent demands for women which could only be met by using all available women living within daily travelling distance. These revised arrangements continued to be the basis upon which mobile women were placed throughout 1942, changes in the colour of areas being frequently made to correspond with changes in the supply and demand situation. In 1943 when aircraft production was given a super-priority and local offices were instructed to concentrate on meeting its requirements, the map had to be completely revised. The scarlet areas were now for the most part those in which important aircraft firms were situated and in which there was no hope of finding the necessary labour except by importation. This in turn called for a reconsideration of the inter-regional linking arrangements, as some of the supply regions would now need all their surplus women to meet the aircraft demands within their regions and could not be expected to continue as exporters. It was, accordingly, decided to reclassify regions in three categories as exporting, importing and self-supporting, as follows:

<i>Exporting</i>	<i>Importing</i>	<i>Self-Supporting</i>
Scotland	Midland	London and South Eastern
Wales	North Midland	North Western
Northern		Southern
North Eastern		South Western
		Eastern

The soundness of this classification was demonstrated by the success with which the requirements of the aircraft programme were met. Although the colour scheme continued into 1944, as an instrument for the distribution of mobile labour it had by the end of 1943 served its main purpose.

One further example of placing instructions may be mentioned. When the National Service (No. 2) Act was passed and women called up under it were given a choice between entering the Services and going into industry, it was felt that the industrial optant should be submitted to a narrower range of employment than was prescribed for the Registration for Employment Order registrants. This was done by issuing two lists of vacancies to which headquarters had given first or second preference respectively. In the former the Royal Ordnance Factories, because of the Ministry of Supply's anxiety about their labour position, at first figured alone, but later small arms and aircraft manufacture were added; the latter was a condensed edition of the vital war work list. This experiment was not, however, a success. An analysis made in September 1942 showed that only about 200 or 8 per cent. a week of the National Service women who chose industry had gone to first preference vacancies, in contrast with 600 a week from other sources. At the end of the year, accordingly, the separate placing arrangements for National Service women were abandoned and all mobile women, whether conscripted under the National Service Act or registered under the Registration for Employment Order, were dealt with under the same instructions. In November 1943 the vital war work list was abolished and in future the headquarters preference lists, which now covered a wide range of vacancies, were found sufficient for the guidance and use of local offices.

In retrospect, perhaps the feature in the story that leaves the deepest impression was the widespread willingness of women to accept the employment they were asked to take wherever it might be and the efforts of old and young alike to make themselves efficient at what was often unfamiliar work. To this happy situation a number of factors contributed, but two stand out in importance. The first—which has been implicit in the narrative of this chapter—was the fairness and impartiality with which the policy was carried out and the recognition by the women themselves that the demands made on them were

equitable and unprejudiced by class or personal discrimination. The second was the attention given to their welfare and comfort both within and without the places where they were required to work and live. This is a story by itself and will be reserved for a later chapter.¹

¹ See Chapter XXIII.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEFERMENT AND THE DISTRICT MANPOWER BOARDS

THE MEASURES approved by the War Cabinet in December 1941 for increasing the supply of men and women for the Services and munitions industries included, it will be remembered, a number of administrative changes proposed by the Minister of Labour in the current methods by which men were reserved or had their call-up for the Forces deferred.¹ Hitherto all men who at the time of their registration were at or above the age of reservation listed in the Schedule of Reserved Occupations for their particular occupations had been left undisturbed in their employment, and numbers of those below the age of reservation had on the application of their employers had their call-up put back. This system of block reservation was now to be discontinued and gradually replaced by a system of individual deferment. This would be done by raising the age of reservation for a large number of occupations by one year at a time at monthly intervals until the occupation would cease to be reserved at all. The future of men who would in consequence lose their reservation would be determined on individual grounds and, if it was felt desirable that they should be retained in their employment and not called up for the Forces, applications for deferment would have to be made for each of them separately. In principle, such deferment would only be granted where the applicants were engaged upon work of vital war importance, and for those under twenty-five it would be refused unless they were in a few scarcity occupations. All existing deferments for men under twenty-five were, accordingly, to be reviewed and normally cancelled. The object of these changes was, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, not only to increase the supply of young men for the Services, but also to ensure that those who were not called up were employed where their skill and experience were most required. To carry this into effect clearly involved a great volume of detailed work and most of this would have to be de-centralised. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the new organisation which was set up and the functions which it was asked to perform, and to assess the success of this experiment in administration.

The first question that had to be decided was the nature and constitution of the local bodies which would be given the responsibility for

¹ See above pp. 162-163. The changes were explained in a White Paper, Cmd. 6324.

receiving and determining applications for deferment. Should they be—on the model, for example, of Local Appeal Boards—independent tribunals composed of persons outside the official world, or should they be an integral part of the Ministry of Labour and staffed with the Ministry's own officers? On this issue feelings ran high in political circles. In support of voluntary tribunals it was contended that they would take a more impartial and sympathetic view of the cases upon which they had to adjudicate and that they would be more acceptable to the general public, which would dislike being regimented by officials. On the other side it was argued with no less fervour and with greater cogency that, if independent tribunals were set up all over the country, marked variations might be anticipated in the standards which they would severally apply in accepting or rejecting applications, and that the consequent lack of uniformity in decisions reached would create justifiable complaints and grievances. Moreover, it would be most undesirable to issue secret information about the changing war situation to outside bodies and, without such knowledge, they could hardly be expected to bring about the requisite re-deployment of manpower. Lastly, so far from the tribunals proving more impartial than official bodies, there was a danger that, just because they would be composed of local residents, they might be less proof against extraneous influences. In the end the Minister decided to keep the administration of deferment policy within his own department and to set up Boards staffed by his own officers to which he would delegate his responsibilities for deferment. There can be little doubt that this was the right solution and events fully bore out the wisdom of the choice. It was significant that throughout 1942, the first testing year of the experiment, no criticism was heard in Parliament of the ways in which the new organisation was carrying out its duties.

(i)

The District Manpower Offices

(a) CONSTITUTION, STAFFING AND SITING

The next step was to determine the number and location of the offices that would be required for the work and the staff with which they would have to be manned. The departmental organisation which had hitherto been used by the Ministry for dealing with applications for deferment of call-up was not well adapted to handle the increased volume of work that would arise and the responsibilities that it would entail. The regional offices were too few and the allocation local offices too numerous and widespread. What was wanted was a sufficient number of offices to cover the whole country. They would have to be

situated in towns which would be convenient ports of call for the public, and each of them would have to control an area in which the population was neither too large nor too small for efficient administration. The best apparent way of doing this would be to sub-divide each of the eleven regions into two or more districts and set up in each district an office which would be responsible to the regional controller for dealing with applications for deferment made by persons living within its defined boundaries. Out of these suggestions, which were approved by the Minister, emerged what were called the District Manpower Offices. Forty-four in all were set up, an average of four to each region, but whereas two offices apiece were judged sufficient for the Southern and Northern Regions, the London and South Eastern Region and the North West Region were each given six. These variations corresponded with the comparative density of the population and the volume of industry in the respective regions.

No less important than the choice of the sites for the District Manpower Offices was the principle on which they should be staffed and run. In discussions on this problem there were two considerations to which special attention was given. One of them was the great strain that would be placed on the chief officer in the District Manpower Office if he was to bear sole responsibility for all the decisions taken; and the other was the amount of detailed information that would normally have to be collected before an application for deferment could be equitably determined, and the need to keep a just balance between the claims of the Forces and of industry for manpower. The second of these difficulties could no doubt be overcome if, on the model of the lay-out of a regional or local office, separate sections were set up within the District Manpower Office to deal with labour supply, deferment, and military recruiting questions, with an officer in charge of each who would report to the head of the office. But this delegation of functions would not lessen the weight of personal responsibility that the chief officer would still have to carry. Some other means of relief had, therefore, to be found and the scheme that was devised introduced an unfamiliar element into normal Ministry of Labour procedure. It was decided that in each District Manpower Office a Board of officials should be set up. The chairman would be the head of the office under the title of District Manpower Officer. The other members of the Board would be, at first at any rate, the Labour Supply Officer, the Deferment Officer and the Military Recruiting Officer, while the services of the Womanpower Officer would be available when women's applications were being considered. Secondly—and here was the novelty—each Board would be collectively responsible for the decisions taken on deferment applications. Thus, while the District Manpower Officer would normally answer any enquiries or criticisms about the action taken by his Board, it would be as chairman of the Board

jointly responsible with himself, and not in a personal capacity, that his representations would be made and requests for the reconsideration of decisions would be received.

With the organisation settled the next problem was to find suitable persons to fill the posts. Some of these were selected from among the permanent officers of the Ministry of Labour but, as this supply was limited, considerable numbers had to be recruited from the professions and industry and made temporary officers of the department. More than half of the chairmen and most of the labour supply and deferment officers of the District Manpower Boards were drawn from outside the Ministry, and with few exceptions they settled down quickly to their new work and proved themselves efficient and capable administrators. Before long the District Manpower Boards had become almost household words and the quality of their service was to be hardly less widely acclaimed.

At the end of December 1941 the newly appointed chairmen and members of the District Manpower Boards were summoned to a meeting in London at which they were addressed by the Minister of Labour. The main theme of his speech was the corporate responsibility of the Boards and the importance of ensuring that the decisions they reached were firm and equitable. They should constantly bear in mind that in their districts they were the Minister's delegates and that he would have to justify their actions in the House of Commons. Later in the day the Director-General of Manpower gave some practical guidance on points that would be likely to arise as soon as the Boards began their work. As the object of the new system of deferment was not merely to provide the requisite intake for the Forces but also to increase and redistribute the number of workers in the munitions and some other essential industries, refusal of deferment, he pointed out, did not necessarily imply that the man in question would be sent into the Forces. His future would depend upon where the Boards thought his skill and experience could be best used in the national interest. Men, for example, engaged on munitions work for whom the Board did not think it appropriate to grant deferment in their existing employment should not normally be called up, but should be transferred to more important work inside the munitions industries. The same principle would apply to men in scarcity occupations outside the munitions industries, of which a list would be sent to the Boards, and to men employed in the supply of gas, water and electricity. As the Boards might often find it difficult to know what was the right decision to reach in some of these cases, they should seek the advice of the district representatives of the supply departments and establish good co-operative understanding with them. They would also find it useful before withdrawing numbers on a considerable scale from an industry to consult the representatives of the employers and workers concerned.

Turning to matters of procedure the Director-General of Manpower emphasised that there were to be no hard and fast rules about the number of times the Boards should meet. It would be left to the discretion of the chairman to call his colleagues together as frequently as he thought necessary, whether for the discussion of questions of policy or for giving collective decisions on individual applications. Before cases were put to the Board it would be for the deferment officer to assemble the necessary data and to make his recommendation on the decision which he thought the Board should take. At this preliminary stage he would in most cases have to consult the labour supply officer, who would have a staff of labour supply inspectors, about the labour position in the firm in which the applicant was employed, and the military recruiting officer on the extent to which the requirements of the Forces were being proportionately met. This, the speaker concluded, was no more than a general plan of action and experience would no doubt suggest ways in which it could be modified and improved.

(b) PROCEDURE

Following this meeting in London the Boards, which started work in January 1942, were sent some detailed instructions on procedure, and in March a leaflet in simpler language was issued for the guidance of the public. These two documents, from which the following short account has been derived, set out the ways in which applications for deferment were to be made and how they would be subsequently handled by the Manpower Boards.

Applications for deferment with which the Boards had to deal fell broadly into three classes. They might be for men newly registered under the National Service Acts, or they might be renewal applications for those who had already received a period of deferment, or they might be on behalf of men who in consequence of the raising of the age of reservation for their occupations were now liable to be called up. In order that men in this last group might not be taken by surprise, a notice was sent to each of them giving them a month's notice of the date at which they would lose their reservation and asking them, as the Ministry had no precise record of where they were working, to pass on the information to their employers. The reason for this latter request was that the onus of applying for deferment rested with employers. If an employer wanted to obtain deferment of call-up for one of his employees, he sent in an application on a prescribed form to the Allocation Local Office shown on the certificate which the man had received at the time of his registration, at least a fortnight before his reservation would come to an end. The application was then passed on to the District Manpower Board for the area in which the employer's establishment was situated. If no application had been received from their employers, men who considered that their call-up

should be deferred because of the importance of the work upon which they were engaged were given an opportunity of making application on their own behalf at the time of their medical examination for the Forces.

When the Boards received the applications they considered them in the light of such information as they already possessed about the labour position in the establishments where the men were employed. In many cases further enquiries were necessary and these might be made by letter, interview or by visits of inspection. Employers, and men making applications on their own behalf, were permitted to make further representations either directly or through the industrial organisations to which they belonged, but no formal hearings were held by the Boards which always met in private. In seeking to arrive at a right decision on an application the Boards applied the following general criteria. If deferment of call-up were to be granted they must first be satisfied that the employer was engaged on work of national importance which must continue to be carried on in his particular establishment, that the employee for whom the application was made was engaged on essential work and that, if he were withdrawn, no substitute could be found or other suitable arrangements made to compensate his loss. A further important consideration was the age of the man for whom deferment was requested. In the revised edition of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations published in December 1941 a vertical black line had been placed against a considerable number of occupations. This, it was explained in the leaflet issued to the public, meant that men in these occupations who were under twenty-five at the date of their registration would not normally be granted deferment; this would also apply to those who were in occupations not listed in the Schedule. These were the principles upon which the Boards set out on their work, but, as will be seen later, their application was more difficult than their enunciation.

When a Board had decided to approve an application it might grant deferment for a specified or for an indefinite period. If, for example, it seemed likely that the employer by making alternative arrangements would shortly be able to release the employee for whose deferment he had applied, he was allowed to keep him for a few months with a further possibility of applying for renewal of his deferment. If, on the other hand, the Board thought that there was no immediate prospect of release, the employer was granted indefinite deferment of his employee's call-up. When the Board proposed to reject an application it first consulted the district representative of the supply department most closely concerned with the production on which the man in question was engaged and, if agreement could not be reached, the case might be referred by either side to its regional superiors. The next duty of the Board was to decide what should

happen to the men for whom applications for deferment had been refused or for whom no applications had been received. If, as we have already seen, they were munitions workers or had some special skill which was in short supply, they were normally transferred to more important civilian work as far as possible in the same occupations. In such cases deferment was automatically granted without a further application and the new employer was informed accordingly. Men made available for the Services were called up in the usual way but, if at their medical examination they were placed in either Grade III or Grade IV, they were put into civilian employment which was of greater importance than that in which they had been refused deferment of their call-up.

As was only to be expected, it took a little time before the Boards got into their stride. Many of the officers were newcomers to the Ministry and no doubt at first found some difficulty in digesting the documents that had been issued for their guidance. Moreover, before they could begin seriously to handle the large numbers of applications that were coming in the Boards had to devise working rules, which would yield quick results and would not place excessive burdens upon their individual officers. They had also to get in touch with their opposite numbers in the supply departments and try to reach agreement on methods of co-operation. It was not, therefore, surprising that after two months the Boards were in considerable arrears of work and had only disposed of about 40 per cent. of the applications they had received. What was more disquieting was the small number of men, 16,700 in all, made available for call-up, and of that total no fewer than 11,500 were men for whom no deferment had been requested. Accordingly, at the beginning of April the Boards were informed through their regional controllers that the percentage of rejected applications would have to be substantially increased and that in each of the two succeeding months they should aim at sending forward to the Medical Boards six times as many men as their present monthly average. This might be achieved partly by applying more rigorous standards and rejecting border-line cases, and partly by concentrating on that section of the field, for the most part the Group III industries and services, from which withdrawals could be most easily effected. This exhortation bore fruit. The demands of the Forces for the first half of the year were punctually met: the speed at which the Boards were disposing of the applications sensibly quickened and by the end of June more than 900,000 decisions had been given.¹

In the second half of 1942 policy concentrated upon building up the Armed Forces and Women's Services. To assist the Boards to find the large numbers that were required some new arrangements were

¹ See Statistical Appendix, Table IX.

introduced. Additions were made to the list of occupations in which men under twenty-five would normally not be granted deferment, and a second list of occupations applying the same treatment to men under thirty was compiled. The list of Service trades was revised and men in a number of occupations, who had hitherto been left in their employment until vacancies in their Service trades occurred, were now made available for call-up for general service where there was little or no demand by the Services for their type of skill. The Boards were further given discretion to call up men under thirty from the munitions industries or vital war occupations where older substitutes could be found or where they were satisfied that such action was in the national interest.

But, although these new provisions increased the supply of potential recruits for the Forces, in practice the Boards had a hard task in withdrawing the men, and not infrequently substitutes had first to be found. When a deferment was cancelled it was open to the employer to protest to the Government department interested in his production. This often led to protracted discussions between the Boards and their opposite numbers and, where differences could not be reconciled, such cases might be referred at first to regional and then, if necessary, to headquarters level. Nevertheless, in the last half of 1942 there was a steady advance in the proportionate number of cases in which the Boards refused deferment. Whereas in June only one in thirteen applications had been refused, in November the proportion was one in six and in December as low as one in four.¹ On the women's side the revised arrangements to obtain a better flow of recruits for the Women's Services have already been described in the preceding chapter. In short, non-optants under the National Service Acts were to be sent into the Services and not as hitherto into industry, and Manpower Boards were instructed to comb out mobile women wherever their work could be done by immobile women, and place them either in the Services or in munitions industries.

(c) EXPANSION OF FUNCTIONS

In the spring of 1943 some modifications were made in the internal organisation of the Manpower Boards and, what was more important, the control which they exercised over the supply of labour in their districts was expanded and strengthened. These changes were introduced largely as the result of the recommendations of a team of inspectors from headquarters, who had been instructed in the autumn of 1942 to make a comprehensive survey of the scope of the work of the Boards and to consider whether this could be profitably widened. They were also to examine the extent to which the methods employed

¹ See *ibid.*

by the Boards in dealing with deferment applications conformed to a satisfactory standard, and to advise on any simplification of procedure which might produce quicker and better results. On the first of their terms of reference the investigators had no hesitation in giving it as their opinion that, if the responsibility of the Manpower Boards for labour supply work was developed, within a reasonably short space of time effective results would be forthcoming. The present position, in which the Boards were responsible for the withdrawal of labour from less essential employment while the supply and distribution of it remained the function of the regional and local offices, was anomalous. In the pursuance of their enquiries about applications for deferment the Boards had acquired much information not possessed by the regional offices, and were in a better position to control the allocation of labour in their districts and to give assistance to other areas. Moreover, to deprive the Boards of any effective say in the filling of vacancies which they had approved tended to damp their enthusiasm, because they were not allowed to carry their decisions to their logical conclusions. On the handling of deferment applications the investigators found considerable differences of practice at the preliminary stages. In some Boards every case was examined by one or more manpower officers. On the other hand, one Board rarely met to record its collective decisions, all cases being individually examined by at least three members and the chairman personally checking some ninety per cent. of the decisions reached. At another Board less senior officers segregated straightforward from doubtful cases and only the latter were examined by manpower officers; the Board's formal approval was then given by endorsing a list of cases, but none of the straightforward applications were looked at. The inspectors considered that, while it was wasteful for senior officers to devote much time to straightforward cases, guidance was needed on the extent to which the preliminary examination of applications could be delegated to less senior officers. The findings of the investigators and their recommendations were discussed with the regional controllers and the following decisions were finally reached.

First, some modifications were made in the composition of the Boards. In addition to the chairman who would continue to be responsible to his regional controller, there were as hitherto to be four other members, but the titles of two of them were changed. The military recruiting officer was replaced by a labour control officer, and the old labour supply officer was now called the district technical officer. These alterations in nomenclature might appear insignificant, but in fact they reflected a shifting of the centre of gravity. Although the requirements of the Forces would continue to be a major concern of the Boards, their attention would in future be increasingly concentrated on the control of the distribution of civilian manpower in

their districts. Secondly, while the principle of the collective responsibility of the Boards for decisions on deferment applications was reaffirmed, some time-saving provisions were introduced at the preliminary stages. In future the straightforward cases were first to be segregated from the more difficult cases by junior officers, who would also make personal recommendations on the individual applications to a member of the Board. When the full Board met it would be sufficient if one or two of the recommendations on straightforward cases were examined, and, if these were approved, the list could then be initialled by the chairman as an indication that the findings were collectively agreed by the Board. This would enable Boards to devote care and time to the determination of the more complex cases. The third and most important innovation was the control over the placing of civilian workers which was assigned to the Boards. In future they would be responsible for surveying the manpower resources in their districts and for overseeing the placing activities of the local offices. In practice this meant that vacancies in scarcity occupations would have to be vetted and approved by Manpower Boards before they were filled by local offices, and gradually at the discretion of controllers the same procedure might be extended until all vacancies which could be profitably handled in this way would come under the control of the Boards.

Under this revised organisation and with this expanded conception of their functions the Boards continued to operate until the end of the war. From 1943 onwards, with the exception of boys registering on reaching military age, there were virtually no untapped sources of manpower. The only way in which the demands of the Forces and vital war industry could be met was by a critical examination of what younger men still retained in civilian life were doing, and by withdrawing them from their present employment wherever it appeared that their services were no longer essential or that their places could be taken by older men or by women. To widen the field of investigation additions were made to the list of occupations in which men below the age of twenty-five or thirty would normally not be granted deferment, and to bring increasing numbers under this ban a new method of identification was adopted. Hitherto the test had been a man's age at the time of his registration; now it was to be the year of his birth regardless of the date at which he had been required to register. For the two lists of occupations in which men below the ages of twenty-five and thirty at the time of their registration had been ineligible for deferment the years 1915 and 1910 were respectively chosen, and the restrictions on deferment were to apply to men born in or after one or other of these two dates. But although more age groups were thus on paper made available for withdrawal, the task of implementing the new arrangements was far from easy. In many, perhaps most, cases in which the Boards attempted to cancel deferments they were faced with

strong representations, which it was often difficult to resist, that the man should not be taken away until a substitute had been found. The supply of older men and of women was drying up, and even when they were offered a substitute who seemed suitable employers were often unwilling to accept him. This insistence on prior substitution before a younger employee could be released seriously hampered the work of the Boards, and it was finally decided that it could no longer be accepted. Boards were told that where they were reasonably satisfied that employers would, if driven to it, be able to make alternative arrangements they should not hesitate to withdraw the worker whose deferment they had cancelled. This was drastic but in the circumstances salutary and justifiable. One of the lessons that the Ministry of Labour learned as the war went on was the remarkable extent to which employers, when faced with what they regarded as insoluble manpower problems, did find a tolerable way out of their difficulties.

In the course of 1943 another source of supply from which young men could be called up for the Forces was made available. This was the apprentices in industry, for whom special deferment arrangements had been made. Hitherto all apprentices in occupations for which in December 1941 the age of reservation was twenty-five or lower had been granted deferment of their call-up until they reached the age of twenty or completed their apprenticeship. This had been done in the interests of the men and their future usefulness to industry, but with the increasing need of the Forces for young recruits such wide concessions seemed no longer justifiable. If, for example, an apprentice on reaching the age of twenty would be automatically called up for the Forces and would not, or only most exceptionally, be granted deferment by the Manpower Board, it was surely difficult to maintain that it was essential to retain him in industry at the age of eighteen or nineteen. It was, accordingly, decided that in future deferment should only be granted for apprentices who were in occupations from which men would in no circumstances be posted to the Armed Forces, or in which the Manpower Boards might grant deferment upon reaching the age of twenty, and that existing deferments for apprentices in other occupations should be cancelled. It was estimated that the total number of apprentices on deferment in the summer of 1943 was about 44,600. Of these some 36,000 would under the revised arrangements continue to be deferred. A little over 8,000 would thus be made eligible for withdrawal of whom about a quarter would only be called up in their Service trades. This was a small but, in the desperate situation, a welcome contribution for the Forces.

Although the Boards were kept in being till after the war, their full-scale activities ended with the capitulation of Germany. In three years and four months they had dealt with approximately 5,342,000 applications for deferment, of which 4,723,000 were for men and

619,000 for women. Of the former they had rejected 660,000 and of the latter 255,000.¹ At first sight it might seem that, although as far as women were concerned the results were rewarding, in the men's cases they were hardly commensurate with the time and trouble they had involved. It must, however, be remembered that, whereas the establishment of the Manpower Boards coincided with the first application of the National Service Acts to women, the manpower of the country had already in the course of over two years of war been pretty fully mobilised. In these circumstances to have made over 600,000 more men available for the Forces or munitions industries was surely a very considerable achievement. Moreover, the percentage of rejected applications for deferment steadily increased as the Boards continued their work, rising from 10 per cent. in 1942 to about 14½ per cent. in 1943 and over 21 per cent. in the final sixteen months. When it is remembered that in handling individual cases the Boards were constantly faced with strong opposition from employers and production departments, this was a record of which they might justly be proud. But an assessment of the Boards' work does not rest only on statistics. With the general public among whom they came to be widely known they built up a reputation for reliability, equity and courtesy. This confidence in their honesty, of which there is abundant evidence, was the means by which the Boards achieved their tangible results. It is also perhaps the best criterion of the success of this experiment in administration.

(ii)

Special Deferment Schemes

To the general principle that applications for individual deferment consequent upon the raising of the age of reservation for occupations should be considered and determined by District Manpower Boards, some exceptions were made. These were mainly for the professions, the press, the stage, national government and other comparable services, but they also included a small number of industries. For each profession, service or industry separate schemes were drawn up, most of which were operated from the headquarters of the Ministry of Labour.² There were sound reasons for this departure from normal practice. In the first place the occupations selected for special treatment were either in professions and services which were organised on a national basis, or in industries which were the particular concern of a Government department or which were under a strong centralised control.

¹ See *ibid.*

² See above p. 159. A list of the special schemes is given in Appendix III at the end of this chapter.

Consequently, the question of the number and identity of persons who should not be called up had to be considered in relation to the manpower of the whole profession or industry, and was not a matter which could be dealt with piecemeal district by district. Moreover, the work on which persons in such occupations were engaged was of a specialised character, and to arrive at a just decision about the indispensability of an individual for whom an application for deferment was submitted necessitated an expert knowledge which the average civil servant could not be expected to possess. Without informed advice mistakes whether of undue leniency or stringency could hardly have been avoided. The special schemes which were accordingly devised differed in detailed procedure, but had this feature in common that before a decision was taken by the Ministry of Labour, whether at its headquarters or through a Manpower Board, the application was referred to a body of experts for their considered recommendations.

Among the industries for which separate arrangements were made were building and civil engineering, for whose manpower there were conflicting claims. At one time it was looked upon as a fruitful field of recruitment for the Armed Forces, at another its full resources were in demand for the Bolero programme and the operational requirements of the Service departments, the allocation of labour for which was the responsibility of the Ministry of Works. In the middle of 1942 all building workers had been de-reserved, on the understanding that their call-up would be suspended if they transferred to employment of high priority.¹ Unless controlled this concession was clearly open to abuse. It was, accordingly, decided that, before a Manpower Board took action upon an application for the deferment of call-up of a building worker, the case should be referred to the Ministry of Works so that it could advise whether the man should be called up or, if not, to what named employment of higher importance he should be directed. Its recommendations were normally accepted. A somewhat similar procedure was adopted for the iron and steel industry. In order to conserve its limited supply of skilled workers and to ensure as far as possible that they were so deployed that the most urgent requirements were not held up through lack of suitable labour, the Iron and Steel Control, which was responsible for the organisation of the industry as a whole, had set up eleven district committees composed of representatives of employers and workers, and each under the chairmanship of the regional controller of the Ministry of Labour or his deputy. To these committees the Manpower Boards sent all applications for the deferment of men in iron and steel occupations who had lost their reservation, and their expert advice was regularly adopted. One further example may be cited. In agriculture, because of the need for increasing the supply of home grown food, most workers were reserved

¹ See above p. 188.

at twenty-five. Those below that age were consequently liable to be called up, but might in exceptional circumstances after their registration for national service be granted a period of deferment. Such applications were made by employers to the County Agricultural Executive Committees, so that before the Manpower Boards reached their conclusions they might be in possession of all the relevant considerations.

The great majority of the special schemes—of which a list will be found in the Appendix at the end of this chapter—were, however, concerned with the professions and the public services and were operated from the headquarters of the Ministry of Labour. Some of these had started as far back as 1940 and were continued in force; others were added subsequent to the introduction of the scheme of individual deferment. The common purpose of these schemes was to ensure that all persons in the same profession or occupation who were liable for military service were treated with equitable impartiality, and that the numbers called up would neither denude the particular profession or service of essential manpower nor conversely leave it with more than it really required. These dual aims could, it was thought, be best achieved by submitting applications for deferment to representative bodies whose recommendations would in practice be accepted by the Ministry. The methods by which this was done varied and a few illustrations may be given. In the world of education applications for the deferment of librarians and school teachers, for example, were referred to the Board of Education. In law, finance, and the press the professional bodies were asked to set up their own advisory committees, which were formally approved by the Minister of Labour. In other spheres independent committees were appointed by the Minister himself. Thus for the Civil Service and a number of boards of control a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Kennet was appointed, and for the stage a committee under Lord Lytton was later established. These special arrangements introduced a desirable elasticity into the general plan of individual deferment, and the results bore out the confidence with which they had been initiated. The experts chosen as advisers performed their tasks with integrity and a full sense of the responsibilities that had been imposed on them.

There was one further class for whose knowledge and skill there were constant and increasing demands both in the Armed Forces and in industry. This was the relatively small group of men with scientific and technical qualifications. To have exempted them entirely from military service would have made an undesirable exception in the general principle of universal liability; at the same time it was no less important to avoid a repetition of the misuse of their talents, which had been one of the administrative errors of the First World War. From this dilemma a practical way out was found. Shortly before the

beginning of the war the Ministry of Labour had established a Central Register, and men with professional and scientific qualifications were invited to apply for admission to it.¹ The intention was, as will be described in the next chapter, that employers should send in their requirements to the Register, which would then select from amongst the registrants those that seemed best suited to fill the particular vacancies. A further use was now found for the Register. When it was decided to apply the Schedule of Reserved Occupations to scientists in common with other professional men, those below the age of reservation became liable to be called up, unless they were granted deferment. Applications were made to District Manpower Boards; but where it was proposed to reject a case the Central Register was first consulted, so that with the technique which it had acquired in assessing the value of qualifications and the relative importance of vacancies it might advise whether the man for whom deferment was requested should be left with his present employer or, if not, whether he should be assigned to a suitable post in the Forces or in a Government department or with a private employer. By these arrangements scientists were able to carry out their national service obligations with the least waste of their abilities and without the impression being given that they were being more favourably treated than other classes of the population.

In order to keep up the supply of scientists, engineers and radio technicians, arrangements were made by which boys at school hoping to continue their training in these subjects at a university or technical college might have their call-up deferred. Similarly, students at universities or technical colleges, who were taking courses leading to a degree, diploma or certificate in an approved branch of science or engineering, might be permitted to continue their studies until they had sat for their Final examinations. In these cases applications were made to and determined by Joint Recruiting Boards, which had been set up at each of the universities and which were presided over by a senior member of the university appointed by the Minister of Labour. To expedite the output from universities and technical colleges and to bring the concessions made to scientific and technical students as far as possible into line with those granted to apprentices, the peace-time courses were compressed into the shortest period compatible with covering the requisite syllabus.² Medical students were placed in an even more favourable position. Partly because of the shortage of doctors and partly because of the length of the medical course they were reserved until they were qualified, and were then called up as practitioners. By contrast, restrictions on students taking an Arts course at a university were progressively tightened as the call-up

¹ See above p. 51.

² In May 1942 the maximum deferment for technical students was fixed at 2 years 3 months (in Scotland 2 years 9 months). See below p. 328.

age was lowered. In 1939 and 1940 when conscription began at 20 they had been able to take shortened courses. With the subsequent lowering of the age of liability at first to 19 and then to $18\frac{1}{2}$ arrangements were made by which on application to Joint Recruiting Boards men in these age classes might be granted one year's deferment, with the added proviso that they would not by the end of their third term have exceeded the age of $19\frac{1}{2}$. Finally when in October 1942 call-up began at 18, deferment for Arts students ceased altogether. If, however, they had an examination not more than nine months ahead of the date at which they became liable to be conscripted, they could apply for postponement of their call-up. In practice this was regularly granted, because the loss of the chance to take the examination constituted in the Umpire's interpretation severe personal hardship.

APPENDIX III

Special Deferment Schemes

CIVIL DEFENCE

Whole-time members of London First Aid and Ambulance Services.

Whole-time A.R.P. Wardens in London.

EDUCATION

Librarians.

Museum Curators.

School Teachers (including Home Office Approved Schools).

Scientific Research Workers in Colleges, Institutes, etc.

Members of teaching, research and administrative staffs in Universities.

Workers' Educational Association officials.

ENTERTAINMENT

Staffs of:

E.N.S.A.

Film Production Companies.

Cinema Projection, Apparatus and Sound Equipment Servicing Companies.

Theatrical and Entertainment Profession.

Members of National and B.B.C. Orchestras and composers.

FINANCE

Accountants, members of the recognised Institutes, engaged in private practice, and their staff.

Actuaries.

Bank Officers.

Principals and Office staffs of:

The Corporation of Lloyd's and Lloyd's Underwriters.

Insurance Companies in Fire, Accident and General, and Life.

Stockbroking firms.

GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Civil Servants (other than industrial grades).

Staffs of Extensions of National Government, e.g.

Administrative and executive staff of Milk Marketing Boards.

B.B.C. Staff (administrative, executive, professional and technical grades).

Administrative, executive, clerical and technical staffs of Agricultural Executive Committees, etc.

INDUSTRIES

Agriculture.
 Building and civil engineering.
 Coal-mining.
 Docks.
 Iron and steel.
 Railways.
 Shipbuilding and ship-repairing.

LEGAL

Barristers and their Clerks.
 Clerks and Assistant Clerks to Justices.
 Solicitors and their Clerks.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Officers within the meaning of the Local Government Superannuation Act, 1937.

MEDICAL

Dental Mechanics.
 Hospital lay staff (including porters, but excluding manual workers and maintenance staff).
 Mental Hospital—male nurses and administrative staff.
 Opticians, ophthalmic and dispensing.
 Osteopaths.
 Pharmacists and Dispensers.
 Skilled laboratory assistants in human pathology and medical bacteriology.

POLICE

Key members of regular public police under 25.
 Members of Admiralty Civil Police Force under 25.
 Auxiliary Police under 25.
 Canal, Dock and Railway Police under 25.
 Royal Marine Police Special Reserve over 30.
 War Department Constabulary over 30.

PRESS AND PUBLISHING

Book publishing, book printing and book binding staffs.
 News' Agency (Reuter, Press Association, etc.) staffs.
 Newspaper staffs.
 Periodicals' staffs.

PRISON OFFICERS

Technical, hospital and disciplinary staff in prisons and Borstal institutions.
 Housemasters at Borstal institutions.
 Attendants at Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Boys' Club officials.
British Red Cross Society officials.
Y.M.C.A. officials.
Probation officers.
Other Social Service officials.

MISCELLANEOUS

Approved and Friendly Society officials.
Architects.
Building Society officials.
Civil Engineers.
Employers' Association officials.
Foreign Embassy staffs.
Dominion High Commissioners' staffs.
Learned Society officials.
Lifeboatmen—full-time.
Lighthouse keepers, lightshipmen, etc.
N.A.A.F.I. staff.
Officers of National Health Insurance Committees.
Patent Agents.
Road Patrol: selected members of R.A.C. and A.A. road patrol services.
Royal Observer Corps (full-time members).
Ships' Surveyors employed by Lloyds, etc.
Statisticians and Economists, including Research Workers.
Surveyors—Building and Quantity.
Trade Union officials.
G.P.O. Wireless Operators and Telephonists.

CHAPTER XIX

PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC MANPOWER

IN THE TWENTY YEARS which separated the two world wars there were revolutionary changes in the science of warfare. With the advance in mechanisation new weapons and new artifices were invented, and the uses to which they could be put gradually refashioned traditional conceptions of strategy and tactics. The design and quality of machines and instruments and the skill to service and operate them would be, it came to be recognised, decisive factors in a future war whether on land, sea or in the air. Experienced and imaginative researchers would thus be required together with scientists trained in the application of their technical knowledge. It was, however, characteristic of the slowness or the unwillingness of the Government to accept the probability of war that virtually no steps were taken until the Munich crisis to ascertain the available supply of suitable scientists or, in the event of war, to prevent their diversion to other forms of employment where their specialised knowledge would be wasted. On the other hand, to meet the inevitable expansion of bureaucracy that war would involve some steps had been taken to identify and safeguard professional men of administrative experience whose services might be a valuable asset to the Civil Service.¹

This chapter will first give an account of the machinery and methods that were gradually evolved by the Ministry of Labour for handling qualified men of scientific and professional attainments. It will then go on to describe—what was one of the most interesting achievements of the war—how by special schemes and improvisations the rapidly mounting demands for scientists, engineers and radio mechanics were successfully met.

¹ The Government's war plans provided for the establishment of new Ministries such as Food, Supply and Information, and for the expansion of the three Service Departments (see W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing: *British War Economy*, page 89). By 1938 arrangements had been made for the transfer when war broke out of experienced civil servants from Ministries likely to contract to the new or expanding Departments. In addition, plans were drawn up for obtaining temporary administrative officers from the Universities and Vice-Chancellors were invited to encourage members of their staffs to offer their services. The response was good and within a week or two of the start of the war numbers of dons were installed in Whitehall. As the war went on, the Civil Service had of necessity to expand still further and graduates were invited to make application through the Central Register to Selection Boards for temporary appointment.

(i)

The Central Register

The idea of opening a central bureau for men with higher educational and scientific attainments sprang directly from the spontaneous offers of service made at the time of the Munich crisis.¹ A little later, when a co-ordinated appeal for volunteers was launched,² the Central Register was set up as a separate branch within the headquarters' organisation of the Ministry of Labour, and men who were prepared in the event of war to serve in a capacity in which their qualifications could be used were invited to apply for admission to it. In the compilation of the Register the Ministry was greatly assisted by the universities and the professional institutions. As early as May 1938 invitations had been sent through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors to members of the teaching and research staffs of universities who were under the age of twenty-five to offer their services, and later this appeal was extended to research workers of the same ages in engineering and science. As a result some 3,000 men sent in their names to the Central Register. In the autumn many of the professional bodies, including the Royal Society, the Institutes of Chemistry and Physics, and the Institutions in the different branches of engineering, agreed to circularise their members and invite their voluntary co-operation. Their example was followed by other professions, and from these sources several thousands of names were entered on the Register. The next step was to encourage employers to use the Register, and in May 1939 the Treasury notified Government departments that, when expanding their administrative, professional and technical staffs, they should notify their requirements to the Central Register and make their appointments from names which it submitted for their consideration.³

In the early months of its life the Central Register had its full share of teething troubles. The chief problem was the classification of the men whose names had been registered. The officers of the Ministry of Labour, who formed the staff of the Register, had experience of the methods used in the compilation of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations and were conversant with the refinements and differentiations of skilled industrial occupations. By contrast, the professional and scientific world was for them new and unexplored territory, and with the best will in the world it was difficult for them to assess the exact qualifications of a registrant and to pick out those who would be able

¹ See Appendix IV at the end of this Chapter for pre-war discussions about professional and scientific manpower.

² See above p. 51.

³ *Report of the Committee on Higher Appointments*, p. 10, (Cmd. 6576).

to fill competently a particular vacancy. Moreover, many of the applicants had given incomplete information about their attainments, and by a curious oversight they had not been asked to state the salaries they were receiving. Men, for example, might correctly enough describe themselves as managers, but there was no indication whether they were holding down posts at £5,000 or £500. Without this information the selection of names for vacancies was bound to go astray. To make matters worse, employers not infrequently failed to describe their requirements with sufficient precision and consequently inappropriate submissions might easily be made. With the large number of names received the work of classification and selection was inevitably slow. Valuable help was, however, forthcoming from the professional bodies. An advisory council representative of the major scientific and professional interests was set up and began its meetings in January 1939. One of its first steps was to appoint committees for the different sciences and professions, and these formed panels to which the Register referred the selection of applicants for vacancies falling within their purview. This procedure undoubtedly saved the Register from the pitfalls of inexperience, but it was too cumbersome to produce quick results. Moreover, there were other difficulties in the selection of suitable men for notified vacancies. Most of the registrants were already in posts and, before they could be submitted to vacancies, enquiries had to be made whether they were willing and able to leave their present occupations. This in turn usually involved consultation with their employers, and inevitably questions arose whether the work on which a man was engaged was of national importance and, if not, whether it might not become so when the war broke out. With all these obstacles to be overcome it was not surprising that the impression got about that the Central Register was proving an ineffective instrument for fitting professional men into posts. Some of this criticism was ill-founded. It had never been the intention that the Central Register should function like an employment exchange and find jobs for the unemployed. Its duty was to record offers of service and, when employers stated their requirements, to bring to their notice the names of apparently suitable candidates.¹ In order to relieve the congestion on the Register and to provide an agency which would help persons with professional, technical and business qualifications to find appropriate employment, a Supplementary Register was set up in December 1939. It operated through sixteen offices situated in convenient towns and, although men qualified for admission to the Central Register could enrol on it, it was primarily intended for those whose qualifications fell below that standard, particularly if they were unemployed.²

¹ See reply of Mr. Bevin to Mr. Joel, 18th July 1940: H. of C. Deb., Vol. 363, Col. 407-8.

² Cmd. 6576, p. 10.

After the war broke out the demands of Government departments for staff increased rapidly; at the same time it became clear that men enrolled on the Central Register fell into two distinct categories. The first comprised engineers and scientists; the second persons with administrative, executive and business qualifications. For the former the demand so far outstripped the supply of suitably qualified registrants that in July 1940 two Orders were made,¹ the general effect of which was that all persons with specified technical qualifications as engineers, chemists, physicists and quantity surveyors, who were not already enrolled on the Central Register or were not serving in the Armed Forces, were required to register particulars about themselves. The position with regard to persons in the second category was the exact reverse. Here supply greatly exceeded demand with the result that many persons with administrative and executive experience, who had assumed that on enrolling on the Register they would be wanted, found their services were not required. The work of the Central Register thus became increasingly concentrated on controlling the distribution of scientists and engineers and, to enable it to perform this exacting task with efficiency, some important changes were introduced in its internal organisation.

The increase in the number of scientists and engineers on the Register brought about by the Orders for compulsory registration emphasised one of its inherent weaknesses. Its methods of working were too mechanical; there was a lack of personal knowledge both of the clients and of the market. Clearly it would not be possible, or indeed necessary, to interview all registrants, the great majority of whom were in employment, but it was desirable that, when a short list of possible candidates for a vacancy had been compiled, there should be some opportunity of forming a personal estimate of their suitability. Similarly, it would be an advantage if officers of the Register were able to discuss with employers personally the type of applicant that would fit a vacancy which they were anxious to fill. Neither of these tasks could, however, be properly handled by the staff with which the Register had so far been provided, even although they had made valiant efforts to cope with the unfamiliar material. What was wanted was officers who could speak the language of the scientific world and who would command the confidence of Government departments and industry. Accordingly, in September 1940 technical officers were appointed for the five technical sections into which the Central Register was divided. At the same time it was decided to continue the centralised handling of all cases falling within these categories, because in the prevailing scarcity of supply the field of employment was national rather than local. The newly appointed technical officers

¹ S. R. & O. 1940 No. 1221, 8th July 1940 and S. R. & O. 1940 No. 1293, 13th July 1940.

and their staff gradually took over responsibility both for interviewing and placing, and the panels which had been set up by the professional bodies were relieved of their onerous task of selection. In their place six committees were appointed to which the Register could turn for help whether in individual cases or when special steps were required to find suitable persons to meet urgent demands.¹ For the efficient discharge of many of their responsibilities technical officers had to be available at their London office, but before long it became apparent that sitting still would not produce the required results. More personal contacts were necessary and these could be best obtained by going out and talking both to employers and to potential candidates at their place of work or study. These itinerant activities, which became established policy, were perhaps the most valuable services rendered by the technical officers. Sometimes they visited a firm where there was a scientist whom they were anxious to obtain for an important vacancy, and by talking to him and his employer they were not infrequently able to arrange for his release. Most important of all were the periodical visits to universities. On graduating all students qualified in appropriate subjects were automatically referred to the Central Register for placing. Under the new plan all such students before finishing their courses were interviewed at the Joint Recruiting Boards at their universities by the technical officers, who after explaining to them their liabilities under the National Service Acts provisionally allocated them to the Services, Government departments or industry. This procedure had two great advantages. First, it made for a sound assessment of the individual student's qualifications, and secondly, from the knowledge in their possession the technical officers were able to make an equitable distribution of the available scientists between the rival claimants for their services.

(ii)

The Appointments Offices

For handling the second category in the Register—the men with administrative, executive and business qualifications, of whom the supply greatly exceeded the demand—such a centralised organisation was not well adapted. In March 1942, accordingly, an important change was made. An Appointments Department was set up in the Ministry of Labour and divided into two branches.² One of these was the old Central Register, which in future was to deal only with highly qualified engineers and scientists and the like; the other was called the Appointments Register. At the same time the Supplementary Register

¹ Cmd. 6576, Appx. VI.

² *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report*, (Cmd. 7225), p. 331.

was abolished. The new Appointments Register was to handle two main types of applicant, men with professional, administrative and executive qualifications, and men—many of whom had already enrolled on the Supplementary Register—whose scientific attainments were not of a sufficiently high standard to justify their enrolment on the Central Register.¹ Moreover, a sharp distinction was made in the ways in which the two Registers should operate. Whereas the Central Register continued to function as a single unit in London, the work of the Appointments Register was decentralised. Thirty-one appointments offices were set up in the larger towns in England, Scotland and Wales.² Of these much the biggest was the London office, and chiefly for this reason it was made part of the headquarters' organisation of the Ministry, whereas the other appointments offices were under the control of the Ministry's regional controllers. If an appointments office was unable to find from its own register suitable applicants for a vacancy, it notified the London Appointments Office, which immediately circulated particulars of the vacancy to all other appointments offices. This ensured that the resources of all the appointments offices were at the disposal of each other. Moreover, as it was almost inevitable that some of the persons enrolled on the Central Register might be suitable for vacancies on the Appointments Register, and *vice versa*, particulars of vacancies likely to be of this kind were interchanged. Similar steps were taken to link the appointments offices with the employment exchanges. Particulars of vacancies for which exchanges might have suitable persons on their registers were circulated by the appointments offices, and conversely exchanges were instructed to pass to the appointments offices the names of persons whose qualifications made them suitable for inclusion in the Appointments Register.³ Thus the new appointments offices were incorporated within the existing organisation of the Ministry of Labour, and full use was made of the machinery for the distribution of information, which the experience of years had raised to a high level of efficiency.

For those parts of its work where an expert opinion was especially desirable the Appointments Register had, like the Central Register, the benefit of outside advice. Four advisory committees were appointed to which questions affecting accountants, actuaries, journalists and linguists, could be respectively referred.⁴ A good understanding was also reached with University Appointments Boards, and arrangements

¹ A separate section called the Women's Technical Service Register was also opened for women whose qualifications whether of education or experience made them suitable, usually after further training, for filling minor technical posts, as for example as draughts-women or time-and-motion-study workers in engineering firms or in the technical branches of Government departments.

² Cmd. 6576, Appendix V.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix VII.

were made by which members of a university, other than those dealt with by the technical officers of the Central Register, might on graduation be interviewed at their own University Board or at an appointments office of the Ministry. One further development of interest took place in 1943. To deal with the current shortage of nurses it was decided to set up thirty-one nursing appointments offices as a separate part of each appointments office.¹ They were given three main duties—to act as a placing agency for persons looking for employment in nursing and comparable services; to stimulate recruitment in their own areas; and to provide an advisory service for the use of employers and persons trained in the profession. It was thought that these aims would be more likely to be realised if they were made the responsibility of a specially constituted appointments office rather than of an existing employment exchange, and there can be little doubt that this was a wise decision.

There were sound reasons for the decentralisation of the Appointments Register. It covered a much more miscellaneous range of occupations than the Central Register, and any kind of employment not appropriate to the Central Register, which was above that of the clerk or the foreman in industry and commerce, came within its purview. Applicants of very varying qualifications were, in consequence, eligible for admission to the Appointments Register and the numbers actually enrolled, which grew with the curtailment of peace-time activities and the consequent loss of employment, were much in excess of the requirements notified by employers. Moreover, especially in the case of applicants with managerial or executive experience, it was difficult from the mere statement of their qualifications on paper to assess their potential capabilities. Administrative experience which many applicants claimed to possess was a vague expression that often meant little or nothing. Personal interviewing was essential if the Register was to make suitable submissions to employers; but with the war-time difficulties of transport and the expense involved this was only feasible if the offices where men were invited to attend were not unduly far distant from their homes. The task that appointments offices were set was onerous. Where the registrants had positive qualifications and on interview appeared to be mentally vigorous and adaptable, it was usually possible to fit them into jobs which they might be expected to do competently. The difficulties lay with the older men, many of them retired army officers, who with no previous experience of civilian employment tended to over-assess both their capabilities and the salaries which they would expect to receive. The correction of these impressions was neither easy nor palatable. In some cases the men insisted on remaining on the Register and waiting for

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 332. See above p. 291.

the chance of what they regarded as a suitable job turning up. In others they accepted the advice of the appointments officer and agreed to the transfer of their registration to an employment exchange where at least they might expect to be offered some work, if not of the kind which they at first believed they had a right to expect. Despite these difficult conditions, between April 1942 and the end of the war the appointments offices were successful in placing nearly 58,000 registrants.

(iii)

Measures for Increasing the Supply of Scientists and Technicians

At the outbreak of war it was not foreseen by the responsible Government departments that full mobilisation of the country for war would require not only the maintenance, but a large expansion, of the peace-time supply of qualified technical personnel. The Service and supply departments were concerned only with their immediate needs, which were comparatively small, and were not at that stage prepared to relax their peace-time standards of professional qualifications. In the scientific world, however, there was not the same complacency. In correspondence with the Ministry of Labour in the autumn of 1939 and in the spring of 1940 the chairman of the Electrical Engineering Advisory Sub-Committee to the Central Register drew attention to the prospective shortage of technical personnel in the field of tele-communications, and urged the need for intensive training as a means of supplementing the supply of qualified persons. In the Ministry's view, however, current estimates of the Service and supply departments did not point to the need for exceptional measures and the matter was left in abeyance. As the training of qualified technical personnel was a matter of years rather than months, the consequences of this lack of foresight were so much the harder to retrieve.

In the summer of 1940 with the development of radar for the Battle of Britain the shortage of wireless personnel of all types suddenly became acute, and led to action at the highest level. In August Lord Hankey, then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was entrusted by the War Cabinet with the task of ensuring the supply of wireless personnel. It was clear that no appreciable number of radar engineers could be found from amongst those already qualified and in employment, and that the only means of increasing the supply lay in the universities. Accordingly, in consultation with the university authorities a special radio syllabus was drawn up which students in physics and mathematics were encouraged to take, and in January 1941 an

Inter-Departmental Wireless Personnel Committee was formally constituted to supervise the execution of the training scheme.

In the early months of 1941 it became apparent that, while the demands of the Services for qualified physicists for radio work would require a large increase in the output from universities, the number of technical students at universities was tending to fall off despite the provision made for the deferment of their call-up. To meet this situation the Board of Education and the Central Register, at the instance of the Wireless Personnel Committee and in consultation with the Vice-Chancellors, produced a scheme for State Bursaries in Science, which was announced to universities and schools in the middle of June 1941. State bursaries in radio, engineering and chemistry, covering the full cost of fees and residence at universities, were offered to boys and girls who had reached a satisfactory standard in certain combinations of scientific subjects. The lower age limit for application was fixed at 17 years and 3 months, and maintenance grants were to be paid without enquiry into the financial circumstances of parents. It was estimated that half of the bursaries would be awarded for radio work.

In the meantime the Air Ministry had put forward large demands for mechanical engineering officers for the Royal Air Force, and the prospect of finding them threatened to be complicated by the steps that had just been taken to divert those available for training to courses on radio engineering. In these circumstances the Central Register proposed that, as the problems of the supply of radio and other technical personnel were closely connected, the whole matter should be dealt with by a new committee under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey with wide terms of reference. This suggestion was approved by the Minister of Labour and subsequently by the Lord President's Committee. On 1st August 1941 a Technical Personnel Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey was set up with the following terms of reference:

'To consider and deal with questions relating to the demand and supply of technical personnel of professional or approximately professional standard, including the determination of priority of demand for such personnel, its economic use, and measures for increasing the supply'.

The Committee was composed of representatives of the Government departments most closely interested including the Ministry of Labour, the Service and supply departments and the Board of Education. A member of the Engineering Advisory Committee to represent the scientific and engineering professions was also appointed to the Committee, for which the Central Register provided the secretariat. The setting up of this Committee marked a turning point in the war-time

history of the supply of technical personnel. An adequate policy-making and administrative machine, capable of surveying the problem as a whole and securing rapid and effective action, had at last been obtained in time—but only just in time—to check a shortage of technical personnel that would have seriously hampered the programme of expansion of the Armed Forces, research and production. It cannot be denied that, if the problem had been recognised and dealt with in 1939-1940, instead of in 1941-1942, the solution would have been easier and more satisfactory. As it was the training schemes adopted by the Committee were necessarily improvised and to some extent hurried, and withdrawals of men from industry created some temporary dislocation of production.

At its first and second meetings on 29th August and 3rd September 1941 the Committee approved a number of measures for dealing with the shortage of qualified engineers, which had been put forward by the Central Register and the Board of Education. Taking up first the question of the economic use of engineers, it asked the Beveridge Committee on the Use of Skilled Men in the Services to extend its investigations to the technical officer grade. This would be parallel to an enquiry that was already being made under the auspices of the Treasury into the practices of the civilian departments. Secondly, to meet the immediate demands of the Services the Committee invited the Joint Recruiting Boards to review the deferments of qualified engineers who were under the age of twenty-five and employed on civilian work. Turning to the future it approved two training schemes. The first of these was the State Bursary Scheme at universities, which had already been announced. The allocation of these bursaries was now fixed in the proportion of fifty per cent. for radio, forty per cent. for engineering and ten per cent. for chemistry, and the total number of bursaries to be offered in radio and engineering was increased. The second scheme was for a six months' intensive full-time training course at technical colleges for the Higher National Certificate in various branches of mechanical or electrical engineering. The trainees would consist partly of men seconded by the Services, and partly of young men in industry who already held the ordinary National Certificate or equivalent qualification, the cost of fees and maintenance being provided by the Government. On completion of the course the civilian trainees would return to their employers to help to replace qualified men who were withdrawn for the Services.

In August 1942 the Committee, which received quarterly returns from the Service and supply departments of their needs including forecasts for the next eighteen months, was notified of a large increase in the number of engineer officers required for the Army. It decided that an additional long-term plan for training was needed, and on 9th September a scheme of Engineering Cadetships proposed by the

Ministry of Labour and Board of Education was considered and adopted by the Committee. This scheme, which was announced to technical colleges and to schools early in October, was specifically designed to train potential technical officers for the Services only, and to tap a source of supply not already drawn upon by the State Bursary and intensive Higher National Certificate courses in industry. Engineering cadetships at technical colleges, covering the full cost of fees and maintenance, were to be offered to boys between the ages of sixteen and nineteen who had left school and had not entered employment in the engineering industry. The minimum standard for entry was the School Certificate with a credit in mathematics or physics or general science. The course of training would vary between eighteen months and three and a half years according to the age and educational standard of the cadet. In contrast with the earlier schemes, the selection of candidates was to be undertaken by interviewing boards in order to determine their suitability as potential officers.

There were thus at the end of 1942 three emergency schemes in operation—State Bursaries, the Training Scheme for the Higher National Certificate, and Engineering Cadetships. Their development from the date of their inception and the measure of success that they achieved may now be briefly noticed.

(a) STATE BURSARIES

Despite the haste with which the scheme had to be improvised a satisfactory total of about 2,000 bursaries were awarded for entry to the universities and technical colleges in October 1941. It was originally intended that state bursars should spend not more than two years at a university, and that a proportion of radio bursars would have to be withdrawn after one year. This, however, led to difficulties. It was found that at Cambridge a high proportion of bursars were placed on arrival in the intermediate year of the tripos course, and would be unable to reach a sufficient standard of qualification in less than three years. Moreover, a number of well qualified Higher School Certificate candidates had refused the offer of bursaries, relying on the fact that under the Joint Recruiting Boards' deferment procedure they would be permitted to spend three years or even more at a university, with a wide choice of subjects if they did not assume the special obligations of a bursary. It became increasingly obvious that for the purpose of national service a difference between the status of bursars and non-bursars was an anomaly, and the situation was met by a revision of the Joint Recruiting Boards' deferment rules. In future, all technical students, bursars and non-bursars alike, were required to complete their courses within a limit of two years and three months.¹ The

¹ In Scotland 2 years 9 months.

universities met this extra load by an extension of the system of shortened war-degree courses and in some cases by the addition of a fourth term to the academic year. Early announcements about bursaries were also made to enable universities and schools to plan ahead and to encourage boys to remain at school and take the Higher School Certificate with the prospect of obtaining a state bursary; otherwise there appeared to be a risk that the flow of Higher School Certificate candidates from the schools would be insufficient to maintain an increased supply of technical students for the universities.

State bursaries continued to be awarded for each of the years from 1942 to 1945 inclusive with some modifications of conditions. In 1942, for example, awards for metallurgy were offered for the first time and in the following year bursaries for chemistry were discontinued. Interviewing of candidates for bursaries was also introduced and carried out by the same Boards as were already interviewing engineering cadets. In all, upwards of 6,000 candidates were awarded bursaries; of these a high proportion justified the awards and attained a satisfactory standard of technical proficiency.

(b) TRAINING SCHEME FOR THE HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE

The successful development of the scheme, under which the first courses started in January 1942, owed much to the co-operation of the professional engineering institutions. They agreed to recognise the full-time six months' course as equivalent to the normal two years' part-time course for the award of the Higher National Certificate. They also organised conferences of industrialists and heads of technical colleges, at which the chairman or other representative of the Technical Personnel Committee explained the purpose of the scheme in relation to the general policy of the Committee. These conferences proved to be of great value in securing the sympathy of industry with the work of the Committee and in overcoming the reluctance of employers to release men from production work for the courses. This was made the more difficult because, with the need to withdraw qualified engineers from industry for the Services, no firm guarantee could be given to employers of the length of time for which they might expect to retain their employees after they had completed their course of training. It was, therefore, notable that, in addition to 1,068 Service trainees, 3,162 men from industry passed through courses during the four years of the life of the scheme.

(c) ENGINEERING CADETSHIPS

In the launching of this scheme the professional engineering institutions again made a valuable concession. They recognised the cadetship courses, which in design were similar to those for the Higher

National Diploma in engineering, for exemption from part of the examination for Associate Membership of their Institutions, provided that cadets reached a satisfactory standard in the final examination. By the spring of 1943 the number who had been recruited and started their training at technical colleges was 3,172.¹ Later in the year a further batch of engineering cadetships was awarded, when the lower age limit was raised to seventeen years and three months and boys still at school within the age limit were made eligible for selection. 770 cadets were enrolled, of whom 160 were awarded deferred cadetships on the understanding that they remained at school until the summer of 1944. In July of that year it was decided in the light of the war situation to make no further elections.

The engineering cadetship scheme, like the intensive training scheme for the Higher National Certificate, was an experiment, and there were naturally doubts whether the products of the scheme would fulfil its aims and prove satisfactory to the Services. It was, therefore, significant and gratifying that, when considering how to meet the requirements of the Army for technical officers in the transitional period between war and peace, the War Office proposed that the engineering cadetship scheme should be continued.

¹ While taking their courses, the cost of which was borne by the Education Departments, cadets had their call-up for military service suspended but they were required to undertake part-time military training.

APPENDIX IV

Review of Pre-War Discussions about Professional and Scientific Manpower

In its Report of 1922 the Graham Greene Committee had called attention to the need of avoiding a repetition of the mistakes made in the First World War, in which little use had been made of specialised talents and volunteers who were qualified for high posts in the Services had often been allowed to serve in the ranks or had not been promoted beyond the status of junior officers. Despite this general warning the matter remained dormant till May 1934 when the secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence circulated to the Manpower Sub-Committee a letter he had received from Sir William Dampier of Cambridge University. In it the writer voiced the concern of his university about the apparent lack of thought that had been given to the potential value of graduates and undergraduates in any future war and the absence of any plan for ensuring that they would be used where their talents and abilities would make the most effective contribution. These representations gave the necessary incentive. In July Sir Graham Greene had some preliminary conversations with two leading members of Cambridge University, and in November the Service departments were asked to join the discussions. After this relatively rapid start negotiations dragged on for several years. Discussions were widened so as to include Oxford and London Universities, but it was not till January 1938 that a plan for the three universities was presented to the Manpower Sub-Committee. It contained two main proposals. In the event of war men under twenty-five were to be invited to register with boards to be set up under Government authority at their own universities instead of at the ordinary recruiting offices. These boards, which would be composed of senior members of the university 'accustomed to judging young men' together with representatives of military studies at the universities, would interview the men who registered. They would then classify them as they seemed fit for commissions; or were of such outstanding ability that they should be recommended for staff appointments; or had technical qualifications which—subject to the confirmation of technical boards to which their cases would be referred—made them more suitable for technical rather than combatant service; or would be most suited for ordinary enlistment and should be dealt with by the normal recruiting offices. Secondly, it was proposed that a central bureau should be established in London composed of members of interested Government departments to receive and co-ordinate offers of service from members of the public with professional or scientific qualifications, including members of a university who were over twenty-five years of age. This plan with some detailed criticisms was approved by the Manpower Sub-Committee but, as it only covered three universities, its

promoters were asked to widen its scope so as to make it applicable to all universities in the country. The revised version, which was produced in August 1938, embodied the main ideas underlying the earlier scheme, but introduced a system of administration which was designed to increase the control of the Ministry of Labour during a period of voluntary recruiting and of the Ministry of National Service when conscription was introduced. As yet, however, no equivalent provision had been made for students of technical colleges. Nearly a year was to elapse before this oversight was remedied and before the final plan was produced and approved (July 1939).

The revised scheme made provision for all scientifically qualified men under the age of twenty-five, whether at universities or at technical colleges, and prescribed a common procedure. Their cases were to be dealt with by Technical Boards, composed of representatives of the universities and the Services, which would be set up at appropriate places and normally in university towns. The duty of the Boards would be to place the men coming under their purview into one of two categories. In the first would come men who ought only to be employed in capacities in which their special qualifications would be used, and the Boards were to distinguish between those who should be employed in the scientific and technical branches of the Services, and those about whom they were uncertain whether they should go into the Services or be given a civilian post. Particulars of the latter class were to be forwarded to the Ministry of Labour. The second category would consist of men whose qualifications did not fit them for employment in a scientific or technical capacity. Of these, undergraduates and resident graduates were to be passed on to the University Joint Recruiting Boards, while other graduates would be sent to the normal Joint Recruiting Offices.

One effect of the proposed establishment of separate technical boards would have been to limit the scope of the Joint Recruiting Boards to undergraduates and resident members of a university under twenty-five years of age who had no scientific and technical qualifications. But there were obvious disadvantages in making the two types of Board independent of each other, and a modification was shortly introduced. The Universities through their Vice-Chancellors' Committee had been for some months pressing on the Government the desirability of the immediate setting up of the Joint Recruiting Boards, and their advice at length bore fruit. By a War Office instruction issued on 4th August 1939 the Boards were formally constituted. The Chairman and university representatives were to be appointed by the Minister of Labour, while the administrative and secretarial duties were to be in the hands of the War Office. Under their terms of reference the Boards were given two main functions—to assess university men as potential officers, and to ensure that men with technical qualifications were not used for ordinary combatant service. To carry out this latter function the Boards would clearly require expert advice, and it was recognised that it would not make for smooth administration if the Technical Boards to which they would be referring cases were, as had been proposed, independent bodies. It was, accordingly, decided to replace the Technical Boards by Technical Sub-Committees of the Joint Recruiting

Boards, and to bring the machinery for handling all types of student under a single control. The Boards were ready in time for the outbreak of war, and in the first six weeks did valuable work in vetting and putting forward the names of large numbers of university men for consideration for commissions, and in recommending for deferment of call-up others in order that they might complete their courses of study. With the introduction of the National Service Act, on 24th October 1939 the administration of the Boards was transferred from the War Office to the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

CHAPTER XX

EXTRANEOUS SOURCES OF MANPOWER

AS THE WAR went on with its ever increasing demands for men and women to carry out the strategic programme and maintain the essential life of the nation, it was reasonable and inevitable that the Government should attempt to supplement the diminishing British manpower with workers from other countries. There were a number of possible sources of supply. Separated geographically by only a short sea crossing were Northern Ireland and the neutral state of Eire, from both of which it was customary for labour to move to Great Britain, and mutual arrangements might be made for volunteers from Eire to work in British industry without laying their Government open to charges of infringing neutrality. From within the Commonwealth overseas, too, some volunteers might be brought over to England, but because of the shortage of shipping and the danger of submarine attack the numbers would necessarily be small. Furthermore, in the United Kingdom itself there were substantial numbers of refugees from Nazi oppression who had begun to flock into the country in the years preceding the outbreak of war, and since the overrunning of western Europe a number of allied Governments with their nationals had sought and received asylum. Lastly, from among the Italians captured in the Mediterranean campaign large numbers might be accommodated in camps in the United Kingdom and found suitable work. In the following paragraphs we shall describe the extent to which it was found practicable to draw upon this miscellaneous pool of potential manpower to help the British war effort.

(i)

Irish Labour

Until the fall of France there were no restrictions upon travel between Ireland and Great Britain. Employers were free to recruit labour either in Northern Ireland or in Eire, and workers to seek and take up employment in Great Britain. Heavy labour was in the highest demand, and of the men who crossed the Channel most found employment as agricultural workers or as labourers in the civil engineering industry.

For women there were plenty of openings in domestic and hospital service. In addition to this recruitment of individuals the seasonal migration of workers for the grain and sugar beet harvest and for potato lifting, which had been a feature of the pre-war years, continued. The influx of Irish labour did not seriously affect the prospects of employment for the British unemployed, since it was used for vacancies which could not for the most part be filled by British labour.

With the growing threat of imminent invasion powers were taken by the British Government in June 1940 to limit travel in both directions between Great Britain and Ireland, so as to prevent the leakage, however unintentional, of information that might be of value to the enemy.¹ Passports and permits were only to be issued if the journey was necessary for business of national importance, and persons who wanted to return to Ireland were only allowed to do so on condition that they stayed there. Permission to travel had to be obtained through a United Kingdom passport or permit office and, in addition to those in Great Britain and in Belfast, a new office was opened in Dublin. However, as the danger of invasion receded the ban on travel was less rigidly enforced.² There were good working relations between the employment exchanges in Britain and those in Northern Ireland and employment that was endorsed by the British Ministry of Labour was accepted as being of national importance, and a permit was accordingly granted. With the exchanges in Eire there was naturally not the same close contact but, none the less, recruitment for work in Britain continued. Offers of service might be forwarded through Eire official channels to the Ministry of Labour in London; or individuals might make their own approach to British employers, while agents acted on behalf of British undertakings that wanted large contingents of unskilled labourers. Although it had been at first intended that visas for travel should be issued only to workers taking up more or less permanent employment in scarcity occupations, it was soon recognised that this was too narrow a prescription and that heavy labourers were in their way as useful to the war effort as skilled engineering craftsmen. Consequently, provided that officials were satisfied that he was of good character, a man applying for work in almost any employment that could be regarded as of national importance was normally passed through. On their side the Eire authorities were not averse from the encouragement of recruitment among their unemployed, and not only submitted names of men wanting work but also asked for lists of industrial vacancies. At the same time they had to avoid the appearance of giving economic assistance to a belligerent. It was clear, therefore,

¹ Passenger Traffic (No. 4) Order, 1940, deriving its authority from Defence (General) Regulations, 1939, 18(1), (2) and 2(A).

² Seasonal workers for the Scottish potato harvest were admitted during 1940 on a six-months' visa.

that the chances that the Eire Government would agree to a wider and more efficient system of recruiting would turn on its being satisfied that it would be operated by private employers and private firms, and not by civil servants in the name of the United Kingdom Government.

At the beginning of July 1941 negotiations came to a head with a visit to Dublin of a party of officials from the Ministry of Labour and the Agricultural Departments. Before starting any detailed discussions the Eire Government asked for, and was given, the assurance that not only would the undertaking which permitted its nationals to return to Eire before being called up remain in force, but that citizens of Eire who came over to Britain solely for war work would, if men, be exempt from call-up and would, if women, not be liable to industrial conscription under the Registration for Employment Order. From the ensuing deliberations a working agreement emerged. Under it the United Kingdom Government was authorised to operate in Dublin through its own labour agent, who was to exercise a general control over recruiting throughout the country. On its side the Eire Government agreed to treat him as the effective liaison in all matters relating to labour engagements, provided that he did not himself do any actual recruiting work. Secondly, the enrolment of workers was to be carried out through the Eire employment exchanges. From the British point of view this arrangement had the advantage that it might be expected to create a certain amount of goodwill among Eire civil servants, and from the Eire standpoint it provided a means of keeping officials in Dublin in touch with progress, so that they could restrain recruiting activities if, for example, it appeared that there might be insufficient local labour for getting in the harvest or cutting the turf. As, however, the Eire exchanges could not be expected to display vacancies received from a belligerent Government, the system by which agents of British industrialists secured on a private footing the services of volunteers was to continue. It was further agreed that in future these agents, who would be assigned by the United Kingdom's officer in Dublin specified areas in which they might look for recruits, would first notify their requests to the appropriate Eire exchanges. The latter would then collect the names of applicants and in due course invite the agents to interview them.

Unfortunately these new arrangements, when made public in Eire, were not well received. There was a campaign in the press against 'foreign agents',¹ and the Government was criticised for allowing country districts to be stripped of labour to the alleged detriment of agriculture and turf cutting. At a meeting in Dublin in October the Minister of Industry and Commerce explained that, while his Government shared the concern expressed in many quarters at the exodus from the country, it was not prepared to prohibit emigration because it

¹ It was subsequently decided to call 'agents' 'employers' representatives'.

could not guarantee universal employment. The agents would, however, only interview volunteers deemed to be eligible for emigration by officers in the Eire exchanges and, with the exception of seasonal agricultural workers, no one would be allowed to volunteer if suitable employment could be made immediately available for him in Eire, nor would any person under twenty-two years of age be permitted to leave the country. With these reassurances the storm subsided.

In practice the new agreement proved a cumbersome instrument of recruitment for reasons that will become self-evident. The procedure was as follows. A British agent or representative was first introduced to the Department of Industry and Commerce by the United Kingdom's liaison officer, who then allotted him the area in which he would be permitted to recruit. After setting up an office of his own in Dublin or elsewhere he made himself known to the exchanges to which he was accredited. He would then select one or two well-known men in the district who were prepared to make his presence and requirements known to the unemployed, and would leave with them a supply of slips which would serve to introduce interested enquirers to their local exchange. The exchange managers then asked each applicant to fill in a form and in due course these forms reached the liaison officer in Dublin. The latter next passed to each agent such of the forms as could be identified with his own particular recruiting activities, together with others from the general pool to which he considered him entitled under the current scheme of proportional allocations to the competing industries. When sufficient applications had been collected to justify a visit to the town in question, the agent made arrangements through the local exchange to interview the applicants—usually only about seventy per cent. turned up—and, after arranging for their medical examination, forwarded the lists of those he had accepted, endorsed by the exchange manager, to the United Kingdom permit office. Birth certificates, travel documents, the signed consent of wives were next collected and scrutinized by officials and then—the slowest process of all—permits were applied for and obtained. The agent was now at long last in a position to make travel arrangements and to book hostel accommodation when, as was often the case, it was necessary for a party to spend a night in Dublin. Railway carriages were reserved and appropriately labelled for the guidance of the travellers, while gangers supervised the assembly of each party and took charge of their permits and cards. At the port of embarkation the agent checked the travellers, gave them coloured badges and advised his employer of their pending arrival in Britain. Meanwhile the United Kingdom's liaison officer was supplied with particulars of the party travelling. With the many motions that had to be gone through it was only to be expected that a considerable number of applicants fell by the wayside. In time, however, a better technique for the issue of permits was devised and agreed

with resulting improvements in speed and orderliness of procedure.

Difficulties and misadventures were not, however, confined to the forwarding country; at the reception end, too, matters sometimes went astray, despite the efforts of Ministry of Labour welfare officers, one of whom was stationed at Holyhead the principal port of disembarkation and another at the railway junction of Crewe. Bigger numbers than were expected would sometimes arrive, or by contrast an expected party would fail to materialise. Unused to rail travel in Great Britain and black-out conditions, Irishmen got into the wrong train or got out at the wrong station. Gradually, however, things improved and special transit hostels were opened in London, Birmingham and some of the Lancashire towns where workers could break their journey on the way to their allotted places of employment. Perhaps the chief difficulty was to find suitable lodgings for those who were to work in industry. Throughout the country there was great pressure on private accommodation for workers and, finally, it was sensibly agreed to allocate the Irish as far as possible in batches to employers who could provide them with hostels where they could develop their own community life with a priest to attend to their spiritual needs. In the early days, too, there were numbers of sick or of possible carriers of infection in the parties that arrived in Britain, but this largely ceased when the Eire Government agreed to the compulsory medical examination of all workers recruited by agents, before they left Eire. Upon entering employment the Irish were in most respects in the same position as British workers. They had, it is true, to remain in the employment specified on their papers and could only change their jobs with the permission of the Ministry of Labour; but most British workers were similarly restricted. Although they were not allowed to bring over their families, those with dependants at home received from February 1942 onwards lodging allowances at the same rate as those paid to British transferred workers. Considering that most of the Irish volunteers had no previous experience of the English way of life, they settled down with reasonable contentment in their new environment, and it was the general testimony of their employers that they worked hard and with a good will.

For some time after the signing of the new agreement in July 1941 most of the workers to be recruited under the group-labour scheme were for land drainage, civil engineering jobs on contractors' sites, and for employment with a few of the bigger engineering firms. Although it was seldom difficult to get seasonal Irish labour for agriculture, land drainage because of the comparatively low wages it offered made little appeal, and it was not till lodging allowances for married men were introduced in the spring of 1942 that any considerable numbers were obtained. Civil engineering, on the other hand, received a steady flow of recruits. It was a traditional occupation for the Irish labourer; it

paid better wages than agriculture and, if a man was prepared to work hard and put up with rough and ready living conditions, he could each month send some money home to his family. In February 1942 an important and beneficial change was made in the method by which recruitment for this industry was carried on. Hitherto firms had employed their own agents and this had sometimes had unfortunate consequences. Some of the agents had given promises of unrealistic wages, while employers tended to regard the volunteers recruited for them as bound to their firms by special obligations. This might not have greatly mattered in some industries, but in civil engineering workers were liable at short notice to be moved by the authorities from one contract to another. There was thus a strong case for recruiting Irish workers for a common pool, and it was this that the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors proposed and achieved. In future they acted in Eire on behalf of all their members and made allocations to each from the available supply of recruits obtained.

During 1941 a few firms, such as I.C.I. and Austin's, had their agents at work in Eire, but it was not till 1942 that under the lead of the Ministry of Supply the recruitment of Irish labour for munitions developed on a significant scale.¹ At first it was hoped by British officials that this might be carried out by a single semi-official organisation on the model of the arrangements for civil engineering; but the idea encountered too much opposition from firms and had to be dropped. Accordingly, there was no uniform plan of action. Some employers continued to keep their own representatives; for certain controls and groups of munitions firms, agents held a mixed commission; in other cases Government officials recruited labour for Royal Ordnance Factories and for industries, such as drop-forging and iron and steel foundries, in which the Ministry of Supply had a controlling interest. Nor was recruiting confined to men. Five women were employed in recruiting women for a common pool from which the needs of the different filling factories were proportionately met. If the methods of recruiting were elaborate and expensive—in 1942 there were eighteen separate agencies at work—the results were rewarding. Whereas in the last two months of 1941 only 297 workers from Eire took up jobs in munitions, in 1942 from March onwards the monthly rate of intake was over 1,000 and a total of 11,000 was reached, of which upwards of 3,600 were women. Later in 1942 the Ministry of Aircraft Production followed the lead of the Ministry of Supply, and encouraged firms in the light alloys industries and in aircraft manufacture to look to Eire for labour to satisfy some of their outstanding requirements. Although similar methods of agency recruitment were employed, the Ministry of Aircraft Production was less successful than the Ministry of Supply in the results it achieved. For some reason it

¹ See P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter VI (iii).

seemed to be found difficult to keep supply and demand in step, and it was not unknown for more volunteers to be recruited than there were vacancies immediately available for them to fill.

With four main competitors in the field—agriculture, civil engineering, munitions and aircraft—the task of the liaison officer in Dublin of ensuring that each received an equitable allocation of the available number of volunteers in accordance with current priorities for labour in Britain was unenviable, and was made even more difficult when in 1943 other industries and services—the railways, the roads and gas, for example—put in their claims. The method he adopted was to assign to each main group of interests specified parts of the country within which they were required to confine their recruiting activities and, if necessary, to limit the number of agents that each might employ. But, although this was perhaps the most practicable way of handling an intractable situation, it could not guarantee the results. Recruiters varied in their powers of persuasion and those who had been longer in the field acquired a superior technique as compared with later arrivals. Thus, although at the beginning of 1943 the Ministry of Aircraft Production was given a recruiting capacity in excess of that of the Ministry of Supply, between April and November that year the numbers brought over for the former were 4,000 as compared with some 7,250 for the latter. Sometimes it was possible for the liaison officer to divert volunteers who had been recruited for one industry to another, and twice in the course of 1943 he was successful in directing a surplus of workers, who were ready to travel to Britain for employment in civil engineering, to the railways and to sugar beet respectively. But these diversions entailed the cumbersome task of re-interviewing the men; for it was the recognised practice that workers should go to the type of employment for which they had volunteered and that each recruiting agent should normally have the disposal of such recruits as could be identified as having been obtained by his efforts. It was not, therefore, surprising that the Ministry of Labour opened the question whether, instead of the system of recruitment by semi-official agencies acting in competition with each other, it would not be better, as it certainly would be administratively simpler, if all recruiting were carried out through the liaison office, which could allocate the numbers obtained proportionately to the different services and industries in accordance with the priorities of labour that were currently in operation. To this proposal the Ministry of Supply, which was well satisfied with the results of its own activities, was strongly opposed, and no decision had been reached when events took a hand in providing the answer.

With the approach of D-day the British Government imposed on 13th March 1944 a ban on travel from Britain and, when it learned that Eire citizens in England were being prevented from coming home, the Eire Government reciprocated by stopping further recruitment.

For the next three months the exchanges in Eire were closed to overseas recruitment, but workers who had already received permission to sail were permitted to do so, and for some time 300 to 400 persons each week actually continued to travel. The hiatus gave both sides an opportunity to consider what should be their policy when the ban was relaxed or lifted. In the outcome the Eire Government decided to refuse permits to all men on the special register of agricultural and turf workers and to all men resident in rural areas and small towns—although at the end of the year those living in unincorporated towns were given permission to travel. As for women, all who were twenty-two years of age and over and were out of work were at liberty to leave Eire if they could secure employment, and even younger women could get permits to take work in Britain as registered nurses, midwives and teachers or to take up a course of professional training. On the British side by the late summer of 1944 the demands for Irish labour had radically altered. Civil engineering had temporarily ceased to recruit; the Ministry of Aircraft Production was rapidly losing interest; and from the limited supply of available workers more than half were going into the food industries. In September it was decided to put the enrolment and distribution of volunteers from Eire completely in the hands of the Ministry of Labour, and thereafter no further workers were interviewed or engaged by agents of industry or representatives of other Government departments. The numbers required for the United Kingdom vacancies were first agreed between the regional offices of the Ministry of Labour and the Government department concerned with the work in question, and the requisitions were then arranged in an order of priority and sent to the Dublin office. All recruiting in Eire was in future carried out by the staff of the Dublin Office. Men and women were not recruited for particular jobs with particular firms, but were told the type of work they would have to do and were required to accept such work at rates of pay of which the minimum levels were made known to them in advance. In selecting jobs for his recruits the liaison officer was guided by their preferences and their industrial experience, and by the numbers that he had to assign to different industries and services. The Ministry of Labour now paid all recruiting and travelling expenses to the employer's door; despatched the workers from Ireland and received them at the port of disembarkation; saw them on their way to their new employment and helped them to settle down comfortably. Employers raised no difficulties about accepting the workers who had been chosen for them by the Ministry, and generally the scheme worked satisfactorily. In the last months of the war building and civil engineering once again took a major share of the imported labour, and used it extensively on bomb damage repair in London.¹

¹ See above p. 250.

(ii)

British and Colonial Labour from Overseas

Within the limits imposed by the scarcity of ships and the dangers of ocean transport measures were set on foot for obtaining British manpower from overseas. Under the Overseas Volunteers Scheme, which started in 1942, British subjects of both sexes living in foreign countries, if accepted by the nearest Consul as suitable for one of the Services or for certain types of employment, were assisted to return to the United Kingdom. Their fares were paid and priority passages were booked for them. On arrival in Britain they were met by welfare officers of the Ministry of Labour, who helped them to find accommodation until they were either called up or obtained employment. Separate arrangements were made for bringing over from some of the Dominions and Colonies men with specialised qualifications for occupations for which the home market was unable to supply sufficient numbers of trained workers. For example, lumbermen were obtained from Newfoundland and British Honduras for tree felling, and men with engineering skill and experience from the West Indies.¹

A further interesting idea, which developed—albeit in a small way—into a practical proposition, was put forward in September 1941. It was suggested that parties of West Indians should be brought over and trained in Government Training Centres for subsequent employment in the aircraft industry. This would serve three advantageous purposes. It would give the people in the West Indies a feeling that they were sharing in the war effort; it would make a small, but useful, contribution to the output of aircraft; and it would enable some of the vacant places in the Government Training Centres to be filled. Plans were, accordingly, made for 200 selected West Indians from the different Islands, who were between the ages of twenty-one and thirty and had attained a reasonable standard of elementary education, to be brought to Britain and trained in such engineering occupations as jig and tool fitting and machine tool reconditioning. The Government undertook to defray the cost of their journey and, after their training was completed, to place them in employment in which they would receive the same rate of wages as trainees from the United Kingdom. Owing to transport difficulties the first party did not arrive till June 1942 and at the beginning of the next year, when because of the shipping situation the scheme had to be terminated, 155 had either started employment or were still in training. As a safeguard against possible antipathy arising out of colour prejudice to their

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 56.

presence and employment, the West Indians were trained in Government Centres in Merseyside, where there were habitually considerable numbers of coloured seamen, and subsequently they were, as far as possible, found employment in the same vicinity. They were housed in separate hostels while undergoing instruction and many of them continued to stay there after they had entered employment. One of the larger hostels was under the management of a coloured warden, and, in making arrangements for the leisure time activities of the trainees and in seeing that they were properly clothed, valuable assistance was given to the Ministry of Labour welfare officers by Mr. Leary Constantine, the West Indian cricketer. From the employment point of view the experiment was generally a success and it was in many ways unfortunate that it had so soon to be brought to an end.

Mention must also be made of a somewhat similar training scheme for Indians, although its primary purpose was to increase the output of munitions in India. This was essentially one of Mr. Bevin's own ideas, who believed that there would be political as well as economic advantages in familiarising Indian workers with the ways in which British labour worked and was organised. An indication of his enthusiasm may be seen from the fact that, when his proposals were in June 1940 at first turned down by the India Office and the Viceroy—who would have preferred the sending out of British instructors to India—he reopened the project with the War Cabinet in the following October and subsequently obtained the agreement of the Secretary of State and of the Viceroy. Under the scheme, which received a warm welcome in both the British and Indian press, young Indian workers of eighteen or over were to be brought to Britain in batches of fifty at intervals of six weeks. For eligibility the educational requirements were simple—familiarity with the three R's and some knowledge of English; in addition, applicants must have had at least three years' industrial experience and have shown manual dexterity at their semi-skilled jobs. When they arrived in Britain they were first sent for a month's preliminary training in fitting and machine operating to the Letchworth Training Centre, where they lived in a special hostel under an Indian manager. For the next two months or so they received further instruction at a Training Centre near Manchester, being found lodgings with working-class families, and they completed their six months' course with private employers. By the end of 1945 700 had been trained, and the record of their subsequent careers in India indicated the value of their visit to England. Most obtained supervisory posts in ordnance factories or munition firms, while a few were commissioned in the technical branches of the Indian Services.

(iii)

Friendly Aliens and Allied Nationals

In the pre-war years a foreigner who wanted to enter the United Kingdom to take up employment was under an Article of the Aliens Order of 1920 only permitted to do so, if he produced a permit for his employment which had been issued to his prospective employer by the Ministry of Labour.¹ To obtain such a permit an employer had to satisfy the Ministry that no British labour would be displaced by the engagement of the alien, that he had tried and failed to find a suitable British applicant for the post, and that the wages to be paid to the foreigner would not be less than a British employee in similar work would normally receive. From 1936 until the outbreak of the war there was an ever increasing stream of refugees from Nazi oppression applying for permission to take jobs in the United Kingdom, and in 1938 over 22,000 permits were issued, more than half of which were for the employment of women in private domestic service.² When the war started the above mentioned Article was repealed, and leave to enter the country for employment was made dependent upon a visa granted by the Home Office, which, however, normally consulted the Ministry of Labour before reaching a decision upon an individual case. On 27th November 1939 a new Order made by the Home Secretary came into operation.³ This affected foreigners who had arrived in the country before 3rd September and whose residence and employment had been made subject to specified restrictions. In place of these particular conditions there was now substituted a general provision that a foreigner must not enter into any employment in the United Kingdom without permission of the Ministry of Labour. Furthermore, for some jobs that were closely connected with the prosecution of the war sanction had to be in addition obtained from the Aliens War Service Department of the Home Office. Within these conditions it was intended that the fullest use should be made of the services of all friendly aliens, and local offices of the Ministry of Labour were instructed to be ready to issue permits provided that this would not be prejudicial to the interests of the British unemployed.⁴

¹ Article 1. (3)(b).

² *Ministry of Labour Annual Reports*, 1936-1938.

³ S. R. & O. 1939, No. 166.

⁴ At the outbreak of the war aliens were classified by Tribunals in three classes :— (A) those to be interned; (B) those to be subject to security arrangements; and (C) those whose friendliness to the country was not in doubt. At the time of the fall of France nearly all male enemy aliens were interned, most of them in the Isle of Man. This was a temporary measure of precaution. In August 1940 a White Paper (Cmd. 6223) set out the categories of aliens in class (C) who could be released forthwith and, as the danger of invasion receded, a more liberal policy was adopted. Aliens in class (C) who did not fall within the categories of the White Paper were registered and interviewed at a temporary exchange set up by the Ministry of Labour in the Isle of Man. In the result some 1,200 were released for employment either in agriculture or industry.

Down to 7th May 1940 most of the foreigners affected by the Order were Germans, Austrians and Czechs, but from that date onwards a new situation arose. With the overrunning of Western Europe by the German Army, refugees began to arrive from Belgium, Holland and France. They were given Police certificates of registration with the endorsement that they had been allowed to land on condition that they did not accept offers of work without the permission of the Ministry of Labour. They were thus, as far as employment was concerned, subject to the same restrictions as aliens already in the country. There was by now a big demand for workers in agriculture and forestry, and efforts were made to try and get suitable recruits from among the immigrants. But there were also large numbers of the refugees accommodated in London and, with evacuation and other war-time problems, it was very difficult to find them employment; nor was the situation improved when some of the Embassies started employment agencies on their own. It was soon evident that special measures would be necessary, and in July 1940 the Minister of Labour decided to set up an International Labour Branch as part of the Employment Department of his Ministry to deal with all questions relating to the employment of foreigners. This new branch was already functioning when the Governments of five countries that had been overrun established themselves in Great Britain.

In the protracted discussions with these allied States two principles were constantly affirmed—the equal obligation resting upon allied citizens and British subjects to do some form of national service, and the right of an allied Government to have first call upon its citizens for military service. Eventually, agreement was reached that all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five and all women between sixteen and fifty, who were of Belgian, Czech, Dutch, French, Norwegian and Polish nationality, should be required to register particulars of themselves; and the necessary Orders were made in May 1941.¹ Special employment exchanges, jointly staffed by the British and allied Governments concerned, were opened in London at which nationals living in that area were invited to register, and to which the particulars of those who had registered at local offices of the Ministry of Labour in other parts of the country were subsequently sent. The registrants were then classified. Lists of men of military age—subdivided into those who on British standards would be available for the Forces and those who would be in reserved occupations—were first sent to the International Labour Branch at the Ministry of Labour. Those outside these age limits and women were then, according to the information on their cards, divided into employed and unemployed. The latter were first summoned to an interview and afterwards those

¹ The International Labour Force (Registration) Orders, 26th May 1941: S.R. & O. 1941, Nos. 719-724 inclusive.

who did not appear to be in suitable employment, while particulars of men and women with scientific and technical qualifications were forwarded to the Central Register. Two months after the registration of allied nationals had taken place, Germans, Austrians and Italians were also required to register under the provisions of a separate Order.¹ The total numbers of allied nationals and enemy aliens who registered were as follows:

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Belgians	5,938	4,907
Czechs	4,613	4,259
Dutch	2,430	1,507
French	2,059	2,361
Norwegians	1,247	616
Poles	5,998	4,615
Germans, Austrians and Italians	13,913	23,320

The great majority of the able-bodied among these foreigners were gradually absorbed into work and, as time went on and a more extensive use of alien labour on munitions became feasible, the Ministry of Labour was able to make transfers from less to more essential employment. By 1943 it was estimated that ninety per cent. of employable resident aliens were in work and many of them in skilled occupations in which they were directly assisting the production programme. Subsequently, a further series of Orders was made for the registration of the nationals of other countries,² which had either joined the United Nations or had become enemies since the original Orders were made. The total number registered was 8,325 in almost equal proportions of men and women.

The most difficult and delicate negotiations with the allied Governments were on the subject of the conscription of their nationals of military age to their own Forces. The point at issue was what action should be taken about those—the numbers were comparatively small—who disregarded the call-up notices issued to them by their Governments. Should they be conscripted into the British Forces? In the end, a scheme was agreed and embodied in the Allied Powers (War Service) Act, which became law on 6th August 1942.³

This imposed upon men of military age of any nationality to which an Order applied a liability to be called up for the British Armed Forces, if they had not within a specified time joined their own national Forces. The period of grace was to be two months from the date at which the Order was made in the case of men of military age, and for younger men two months from the date at which they became

¹ S.R. & O. 1941, No. 1020.

² S.R. & O. 1943, Nos. 1047-1052 inclusive.

³ 5 & 6 Geo. 6. c.29.

eighteen. Before a particular Order could be made each allied Government had to assent to its terms and was given the right of excepting any of its citizens from its application. In consequence delays occurred but eventually an Order covering the different nationalities was made on 11th March 1943.¹ About 10,000 men in all were affected and, instead of requiring them to register at local offices, registration cards—based on the particulars they had given when registering under the International Labour Registration Orders—were issued to each of them. Registrants were given the same privileges as British subjects under the National Service Acts. They could ask—or their employers could apply—for their call-up to be deferred, and at the time of their medical examination they had the statutory right of applying for postponement on grounds of severe personal hardship. With the exception of those whose skill and experience fitted them for service in the Air Force, all others were posted to the Pioneer Corps. Subsequently, some men with special qualifications were sent to other branches of the Army, and a few who asked to transfer to the Navy were permitted to do so. In August 1944 further Orders were made for the nationals of France and the United States of America,² and the same procedure was followed except that, as there had been no registration of American citizens in this country, particulars of the men to be called up were provided by the United States authorities.

(iv)

Prisoners of War

Early in 1941 the War Cabinet approved a proposal of the Minister of Agriculture to bring over from Africa some 2-3,000 captured Italians to work in gangs on urgent drainage and reclamation schemes under the County Agricultural Executive Committees. In the summer, with the double purpose of reducing the number of soldiers in Africa engaged in guarding prisoners and of meeting requirements at home for heavy labour, a more ambitious programme was set on foot. From then onwards batches of Italian prisoners continued to arrive in the country as quickly as shipping was available and camps could be got ready for their accommodation. By the end of 1942 there were 39,300 at work in the country and a year later the number had increased to 75,000. Of these about 50,000 were in agriculture and more than half of the remainder in timber production and limestone quarrying. The rest were employed as labourers in, for example, iron ore mining and brickmaking, in repairing roads, and in loading and unloading wagons

¹ S.R. & O. 1943, No. 381. The Order applied the Act to men who were nationals of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia.

² S.R. & O. 1944, Nos. 991 and 992.

at railway dépôts. The Ministry of Labour was responsible for allocating the prisoners to civil employment and it was assisted by an inter-departmental committee, on which all the Ministries with an interest in prisoner-of-war labour were represented. From the spring of 1944 when Italy ceased to be a belligerent the range of occupations on which Italians might be employed was extended, so as to give an opportunity of using their industrial skill or experience. Their employment, however, in industry either in a skilled or unskilled capacity was made dependent upon there being no British labour available and upon no objection being raised by the local branch of the trade union concerned. Similarly, when in the last months of the war redundancy of labour in certain industries began to occur, steps were taken to ensure that Italian prisoners were not retained on jobs for which suitable British workers were available.

In the course of 1944 large numbers of German prisoners were brought across the Channel, and the resulting accommodation difficulties reduced the number of Italians who might otherwise have been admitted to the country. From the manpower point of view this was a disadvantage, because the Germans were only permitted to work in gangs with an armed escort and, consequently, the range of jobs they could be given to do was much restricted. In the autumn, however, when there were fears that all the harvest might not be gathered or the potatoes lifted because of the persistent bad weather and the reduced help that the Services could offer, a successful experiment was made of allowing small groups of Germans to work unescorted in the fields.

By the end of the European War there were about 224,000 prisoners of war at work in the country. Of these 131,800 were Italians and the remainder Germans.¹

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 57.

CHAPTER XXI

EMPLOYMENT FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

(i)

The Juvenile Employment Service

IN THE EARLY YEARS of the present century public opinion began to be seriously concerned about what happened to boys when they left school and entered the labour market. In their report the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, which had been set up in 1905, called attention to the haphazard methods of seeking jobs that prevailed. A large proportion of boys leaving elementary schools were finding their way into blind alley occupations, which required no skill and provided no training for better employment in the future. In consequence, as they grew older they tended to drift from one casual job to another or swelled the ranks of the unemployed. The Commission recommended that a national system of employment exchanges should be set up and, as a means of supervising the entry of boys into employment, suggested that they should include arrangements for giving parents and teachers information and advice about suitable occupations for their children. Legislative effect was given to these proposals in the Labour Exchanges Act 1909, and in a number of the exchanges the Board of Trade included special juvenile departments. In the next year the Education (Choice of Employment) Act formally empowered local education authorities in England and Wales, some of which had already set up bureaux to help boys and girls in selecting employment, to provide a service for young people under seventeen in their areas. Thus by two Acts of Parliament passed in successive years the State recognised the need for providing facilities for assisting boys and girls, who had been educated largely at public expense, to choose the right career or the job best suited to their capacities. The intention was good, but the dual methods for carrying it out created administrative difficulties. Whereas the Board of Trade—and after 1917 the Ministry of Labour—was responsible for the work in the exchanges, the Board of Education had the oversight and supervision of the service provided by the education authorities.

With a view to lessening the inconveniences of this division of central authority, the two departments in 1911 attempted to delimit their respective fields of interest. Education authorities exercising their

powers were to confine themselves to interviewing, advising and selecting applicants on their registers; the exchanges were to register vacancies, place boys and girls in work, and oversee their progress during the early years of employment. This demarcation of functions was easier to define than to put into practice, and the will to co-operate was not always present. The uneasy partnership was further disturbed when with the passing of the Unemployment Insurance Act 1920 the Minister of Labour was made responsible for unemployed juveniles in all areas. Towards the end of the year the Government invited Lord Chelmsford to examine the whole situation. In his report he recommended that education authorities should be urged to exercise their powers under the 1910 Act, and that those who did should be obliged to undertake the administration of unemployment insurance. If an education authority decided not to exercise powers, then the choice of employment work should fall in that area to the Ministry of Labour. Lord Chelmsford did not, however, resolve the question of central responsibility. The Board of Education was left with the supervision of the whole work, including the administration of unemployment insurance, in areas where education authorities were exercising their powers, while the Ministry of Labour controlled the service in the rest of the country. In view of the fact that the Minister of Labour was responsible to Parliament for all unemployment insurance, this arrangement was bound to create difficulties and in 1925 another attempt was made to resolve the issue. A committee, set up under the chairmanship of Mr. (later Sir) Dougal Malcolm, recommended that the divided central responsibility should be ended by making the Minister of Labour responsible for the choice of employment service including the administration of unemployment insurance in all areas, whether the work was being carried on by education authorities or by his own department; but that locally the dual system should continue. This proposed change was given legislative sanction by the Ministry of Labour (Transfer of Powers) Order of 25th July 1927. The Board of Education was in consequence relieved of all supervisory and grant-aiding duties, and the Ministry of Labour became responsible for the administration of the whole service and for the payment of grants to education authorities who were exercising their powers.

Another survey made in 1933 by the National Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment confirmed in substance the findings of the Malcolm Committee, and from then until the end of the Second World War no further administrative changes were made, except that in 1935 the statutory power of education authorities to operate the service was transferred from the Education Act to the Unemployment Insurance Act passed in that year. In Scotland the position was different and simpler. Education authorities had not the right possessed by their counterparts in England and Wales to operate a choice of

employment service. The most they were authorised to do under the Education (Scotland) Act of 1908 was to maintain agencies for the collection of information about employment open to children on leaving school; and, in fact, Edinburgh was the only authority which in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour made use of this power. Consequently, it fell to the Ministry of Labour to provide the service in all parts of Scotland.

The methods by which the service was run locally were similar, whether the Ministry of Labour or education authorities were responsible. The focus was an office under the charge of a juvenile employment officer, which might have its own separate premises or be housed within the exchange or the local education offices. To advise the officer in his work and to assist him in giving guidance to boys and girls local committees were set up, among whose members were representatives of teachers, local education authorities, employers and workers, together with a few persons interested in the welfare of the young. The service was entirely voluntary and for that reason the co-operation of the schools was essential. In practice good relations were normally established with the elementary schools, but the secondary schools tended to disregard the service and make their own arrangements for advising their school leavers. The scope of the service was thus largely confined to helping boys and girls who finished their schooling at the age of fourteen; but in a few of the larger towns special arrangements were developed for dealing with the secondary schools. In London, for example, a Headmasters' and a Headmistresses' Committee were set up under the chairmanship of a headmaster and headmistress respectively with members drawn from the professions, industry and commerce, and with a secretary provided by the Ministry of Labour. These two committees and a comparable body in Glasgow, known as the Glasgow Careers Council, did valuable work in collecting and making available information about careers for older boys and girls and in providing vocational guidance for those who asked to receive it.¹

Since the inception of the scheme in 1909 considerable success had rewarded the efforts that had been made to help boys and girls in their choice of suitable employment, and there were good prospects that the service would grow and become gradually acceptable to a high proportion of teachers, parents and their children at whatever age they left school. But the outbreak of war put an end to further developments. Almost at the outset the Ministry of Labour decided to suspend the work of its Juvenile Advisory Committees and, even if this action may be judged to have been premature, it merely anticipated an inevitable curtailment of activities in all parts of the country. For

¹ See *Report of the Committee on the Juvenile Employment Service*, para. 7-30, published by H.M. Stationery Office 1945.

staffing reasons alone it would not be possible to maintain the choice of employment service at its peace-time standard. Moreover as time went on, boys and girls would be increasingly required to do jobs connected with the war, and it was unrealistic to pretend that in advising them what they should do the primary consideration could consistently be the type of employment which was best suited to their future development. At the same time it was no less important to try and shield the young from unsuitable war-time employment that offered high wages, and to encourage them to accept jobs in which they would be making to the war effort a contribution, as good if not better, without detriment to their health and well-being. There was thus clearly much that a juvenile employment officer could do. The question was whether persuasion alone would achieve the desired results, or whether while the war lasted some measure of compulsion should be imposed. Was it right that boys, if not girls, between the ages of sixteen and eighteen should continue to be left free to work where and when they pleased?

(ii)

War-Time Policy

It would have been possible under the terms of Defence Regulation 58A to issue directions to boys and girls to do particular jobs and, to ensure fair treatment, an Order could have been made requiring them to register by age groups. Such an extension of labour controls, with the sanction of prosecution in the event of non-compliance with a direction, was not seriously contemplated. It ran counter to Mr. Bevin's humanitarian instincts and to his general distaste for the use of compulsion to workers of any age, and there can be little doubt that it would have met with strong opposition from the public in general and from parents in particular. Boys and girls were, therefore, to be left free to decide what work, if any, they should take, with such guidance as they might receive and accept from their parents, teachers or a juvenile employment officer. With the making of the Essential Work Order in 1941, however, a new issue arose. Juveniles who were employed in scheduled undertakings were equally with adults liable to the restrictions that the Order imposed. Supposing, then, they left without permission or ignored warnings about absenteeism or bad time-keeping, was their misconduct to be overlooked or should they, like adults, be prosecuted for non-compliance with the terms of the Order? To the suggestion that juveniles should be excluded as a class from the operation of the Order there were strong objections. In many undertakings adults and juveniles worked together in teams and output would be seriously retarded, if there was no guarantee that the younger workers would be regular in their attendance. Secondly,

exemptions under the Order would tend to encourage an irresponsible movement of juveniles from one job to another in search of higher wages. It was, accordingly, decided that juveniles should remain subject to the Order; but special steps were taken to lessen its impact. When a young worker failed to carry out some part of his contract, he was interviewed by the National Service officer and juvenile employment officer in the presence, if possible, of his parents. If they did not succeed in securing his compliance, the probation officer of the Juvenile Court was consulted before a prosecution was recommended; all such recommendations were then further considered by the administrative branch at the Ministry's headquarters before legal proceedings were instituted. Unless the circumstances were altogether exceptional, no boy or girl who was under the age of sixteen was prosecuted. Similarly, if a young worker wanted to leave a scheduled undertaking, the National Service officer consulted the juvenile employment officer, who was also present at the hearing of any appeal against the decision of the National Service officer. The wind was truly tempered to the shorn lamb.

Towards the end of 1941 when compulsory recruitment to the Women's Auxiliary Services was under consideration, the Prime Minister, to whom the proposal was repugnant,¹ suggested that, as an alternative to conscripting women, boys between leaving school and call-up should be required to join Cadet Corps on a part-time basis. This would have two advantages. Firstly, the Cadet Corps could be used to help to man searchlight and anti-aircraft batteries—to which it was intended to allocate some of the women who would be conscripted to the A.T.S.—and, secondly, the discipline that the boys would acquire would be a sound preparation for their later military service. The Prime Minister's proposal was approved by the War Cabinet, and the Lord President in consultation with other Ministers was asked to prepare a scheme. But in the course of their deliberations serious objections came to light. Already not enough boys were enrolling in young soldiers' battalions and the Army Council was afraid that to make them eligible for service in A.D.G.B.² Units, which was bound to be more popular, would be a further deterrent to bringing the battalions up to strength. It would be preferable to encourage the seventeen-year-olds to join the Home Guard, which it was proposed to use in A.D.G.B. operations. But what chiefly made the Prime Minister's proposal impracticable was the impossibility of finding sufficient instructors for Cadet Corps, even if boys of fourteen and fifteen were excluded, without denuding other essential services.

The original plan was accordingly dropped, but it was decided to proceed with a modified version—even though the Prime Minister had

¹ See above p. 286.

² Air Defence, Great Britain.

by now withdrawn his opposition to the conscription of women. The new scheme was designed to encourage boys and girls of sixteen and seventeen, if they were not already members, to join an appropriate youth club or organisation in which they could do some national service. The procedure for carrying it out involved a measure of compulsion. All boys and girls of these ages were to be required to register particulars about themselves at a local office of the Ministry of Labour and subsequently, if summoned, to attend for interview with the local education authority. The Registration of Boys and Girls Order was made by the Minister on 22nd December 1941,¹ and the first registrations of boys and girls in their age groups took place during the following four months. Of the 835,000 boys who registered some 67,000 were still at school, and of the remainder about half were not attached to any approved organisation. In this total, however, about one-fifth were, according to their statements, travelling considerable distances each day to their jobs, and it was felt that it would be unreasonable to expect them to do more work in the evenings. In the end, some 290,000 boys were interviewed and 211,000 of them encouraged to join a youth organisation. Among the girls the proportion belonging to a club or service was only about a quarter of the 800,000 who registered. After setting aside apparently inappropriate cases, some 400,000 were interviewed and 300,000 encouraged to join an approved organisation.² If all the boys and girls had responded to these invitations and had joined and stayed in some club or service, the scheme would have been abundantly justified. Unfortunately, the evidence is that only a proportion followed the advice immediately and continued in membership for any length of time, and it seems probable that at least forty per cent. remained unattached to any youth organisation. From later registrations progressively fewer volunteers were forthcoming, and by the end of 1944 the scheme was virtually dead, although it was not formally wound up until August 1945. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that at least as good results could have been obtained by less cumbersome methods. Probably all that was needed was some well planned pictorial publicity.

(iii)

The War-time Distribution of Juveniles in Employment

We may now turn to an examination of the kinds of jobs on which boys and girls were engaged during the Second World War. We shall begin with a survey of the general trends of employment and then go on

¹ S.R. & O., 1941, No. 2146.

² *Youth Registration in 1942*, Cmd. 6446.

to discuss some particular problems that called for remedial action by the Government. The first point that needs to be emphasised is the progressive decrease in the number of juveniles that were available for work. This was due to the decline in the birth-rate which began in 1922 and continued in the ensuing years. The figures speak for themselves. Between July 1938 and July 1945 the number of boys insured against unemployment fell from 1,193,000 to 925,000, and the number of girls from 944,500 to 878,000, despite the fact that between 1939 and 1942 considerable numbers left private domestic service, in which they were not insured, and entered insured industrial employment. The total number of boys and girls available for employment thus declined during the war by more than 330,000, and the lessening supply was insufficient to meet the increasing demands of industry and commerce.

Within the industrial field there were some marked changes in the distribution of young workers, of which detailed information will be found in Table 30.¹ In the general engineering group, and in aircraft and motor manufacture, there was an outstanding increase in the number of boys and girls until the peak of production was reached respectively in 1942 and 1943. By these dates engineering had taken on 26,000 more boys and almost as many more girls, while in aircraft and motor manufacture an additional 23,000 boys and 22,000 girls had been absorbed. National and local government, which were expanding throughout most of the war, took on a large number of boys and girls, partly as replacements for men called up for the Forces, and partly to cope with the rising volume of work. Although 1942 was the year in which the highest total of boys were at work in the two services, the number of girls continued to grow until in 1944 there were 52,000 employed as compared with 13,500 in the mid-summer of 1938. Among other industries, agriculture and railways showed almost each year an increasing number of boys at work, while the distributive trades and the industrial group comprising commerce and the professional services recruited tens of thousands of girls to replace the adult staff, which had been called up to the Forces or transferred to employment more closely connected with the war effort. On the opposite side of the scale, coal-mining—of which more will be said later—declined sharply and in 1945 there were 40,000 fewer boys on the colliery books than in 1938. There were also significant decreases in the number of boys employed in furniture and tailoring, for whose products there is less demand in war than in peace. Among industries whose workers are predominantly female, textiles were employing over 50,000 fewer girls at the end as compared with the outbreak of the war, while the number in clothing—because of shortage of materials—and in laundries—perhaps because of the working conditions—dropped by several thousands. The building industry, which

¹ See below p. 371.

recruits its craftsmen from boy apprentices, had a chequered history; at some stages of the war it was earmarked as a reservoir for the Forces, and at others all its resources were in demand to cope with the Government's Building Programme and the repair of war-damaged property. These vicissitudes were reflected in the number of boys which it employed. In the first year of the war the figures dropped steeply; then in 1941-1942 there was a temporary recovery due to the employment of a large number of boys on unskilled work, but it was not until 1944 that, as a result of special measures to which we will return, a steady upward movement in the number of apprentices entering the industry began.

In the years of trade depression between the wars many boys and girls had been unable to obtain work and unemployment was widespread in the North West and North East of England, in Scotland and in Wales. As there was little prospect of an early revival of employment, especially in the mining areas, a transfer scheme—financed at first from voluntarily subscribed funds and subsequently by the State—was put into operation, by which boys and girls going to jobs found for them in other parts of the country would be paid sufficient to maintain themselves. Between 1928 and 1939 some 80,000 were transferred, but on the whole parents disliked the separation from their children.¹ By 1937 many boys and girls had returned home and with the outbreak of war the drift accelerated. With the added uncertainty of when and where air-raids might develop, it was accordingly decided to wind up the transfer scheme.

For a time after the beginning of the war juvenile unemployment not merely persisted but actually increased in some of the old depressed areas, and it was also prevalent in a number of evacuation centres such as Portsmouth and Chatham, and in the South East coastal towns. There was some talk of reviving the transfer scheme but, apart from the difficulties of moving young people away from their homes under war-time conditions, it was generally felt that employers who wanted to import young workers should pay them enough to keep themselves. Comparatively few transfers, however, resulted, and an indication of the seriousness of unemployment was the re-opening of some forty Junior Instruction Centres, which in the years of the trade depression had been set up as a means of occupying boys and girls and keeping them fit. Soon after the Churchill Government came into power a new suggestion was made. Numbers of unemployed boys were being trained in engineering classes at Government Training Centres, but there were not sufficient local jobs available on the completion of their courses. Wages for boys in the engineering industry were generally low and those obliged to live away from home could not support themselves on what they received. It was, accordingly, proposed that they should be

¹ See annual Reports of the Ministry of Labour, 1928-1938.

paid enough for their maintenance. Unfortunately a long controversy ensued about how this should be done. The engineering employers were opposed to a revision of the rates of wages for this purpose, and the unions to the employment of juveniles as 'dilutees' because of the adverse effect it might have upon boys doing their apprenticeships, while the Government was reluctant to subsidise wages. At last, after two years of abortive discussion the Minister of Labour, who had hoped that boys' wages in the engineering industry would rise, agreed to accept some form of maintenance allowances, provided that the assistance given was on a flat rate. The scheme that was finally approved was confined to boys between sixteen and eighteen, and included not only those trained at Government Training Centres but also apprentices and any other boys transferred through the employment exchanges. It consisted of a weekly allowance of 20s. for boys of sixteen, 16s. for those aged seventeen, and 6s. for the eighteen-year-olds, which was to be paid for the first eight weeks of their employment regardless of earnings. The question whether it should continue beyond this period was left to the Local Juvenile Committees to determine on the merits of each individual case. In all, some 2,000 young workers were assisted under the scheme at the average cost of £17 a head. Considering the small expenditure involved, it was all the more regrettable that questions of principle had been allowed to hold up for so long a sensible and useful scheme.

With the expansion of production for war and the withdrawal of adult workers from their normal civilian occupations, the demand for boys and girls grew and unemployment from 1941 onwards rapidly declined. In November 1942 the number registered as unemployed had fallen from 101,000 at the end of 1938 to 16,500, and it was still at this level a year later. It should, moreover, be emphasised that these reduced figures do not mean that there were 16,000 boys and girls for whom no jobs were available. Statistics of juvenile unemployment are swollen by school leavers who may be content to wait a little before going into employment, and by boys and girls who at sixteen have to find new work because for the jobs they have been doing younger children are normally engaged. A truer picture of the actual volume of unemployment may be derived from the numbers receiving unemployment benefit. In November 1938 there were 48,720; in October 1943 there were only 1,730 and most of these were physically or mentally handicapped.¹

¹ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, December 1938 and November 1943.

(iv)

Special Problems

There were two industries dependent upon a steady recruitment of boys for the maintenance of their skilled adult labour forces, whose future prosperity was during the war jeopardised by a serious decline in the numbers applying for admission. These were coal-mining and building. In each the situation was for different reasons so disquieting that the Government decided that special remedial measures were essential. Before describing the cures let us attempt to diagnose the maladies.

(a) COAL-MINING

The report of the Royal Commission on Mines published in 1926 contained the following observations. 'The mining industry is hardly ever likely to be short of an ample and, it may be, an excessive supply of boys and youths coming from school. The mining population has always been one of comparatively large families and one which in spite of relatively high death rates in early years tends to grow more rapidly than the rest of the population. . . . In the past the industry as a whole has been able to expand more rapidly than the population as a whole. If, as is possible in future, the growth of opportunities for employment in coal-mining is not going to be so rapid, the difficulty of finding employment even for the children of those already in the industry will be very serious'.¹ The history of the next ten years was to show how greatly the Commission's forecast had underestimated the possibility of a rapid deterioration in employment prospects. Within a few years the market for coal had sharply declined; and with under-production heavy unemployment set in. When the acute trade depression had passed, not only ex-miners who had left the industry, but many of those who had retained their jobs or waited in unemployment in the hope of work in the pits, with tragic irony exerted all their influence to dissuade their sons from going into the mines. In this they were strongly supported by their wives who, with the experience of long unemployment and with memories of accidents in the pits, looked for safer, healthier and more stable employment for their sons in other industries. Moreover, so far from increasing, miners' families were becoming smaller so that not only was the mining community less tied to its traditional occupations, but there was also a smaller pool of boys from which to draw new labour. Lastly, whereas improved transport facilities were bringing alternative employment within daily travelling distance of the miners' sons, the pits failed to attract in

¹ Cmd. 2600, Vol. 1, p. 188.

return recruits from towns lying outside, but not far from, the mining areas.

For some years the drift away from the mines had little adverse effect on a sufficient output of coal to meet current needs, and no general alarm was felt at the increasing tendency of boys leaving school to choose other types of employment when these were available. After war broke out the anxiety of the Ministry of Labour about the number of idle boys in mining areas was due more to the incongruity of continuing unemployment in war-time than to fear for the maintenance of adequate coal supplies. Moreover, with the loss of Continental markets in May 1940 it was thought that the mines could produce all that was required with a smaller labour force, and unemployed miners were either called up for the Forces or were allowed to take other employment. It was not till the spring of 1941 that the seriousness of the situation was recognised and attempts were made to get ex-miners to return to the pits.¹ But even if—as was highly problematical—the necessary target of adult manpower could have been reached, it was clear that the total could only be maintained by a larger intake of boys—which, by then, was well below the wastage due to retirement, disablement and death. It was further noticeable that a very small number of vacancies for boys had been notified to the exchanges. This may have been partly because collieries had not yet formed the habit of asking exchanges to help, and partly because the managements did not believe that the boys were available and did not think it worth while to put in their applications. In June 1941 the district production committees were asked by the Mines Department to investigate the requirements for young workers, and in the following month the Minister of Labour appointed labour supply inspectors to work in co-operation with the committees. Whether it was directly due to their combined efforts or not, the number of notified vacancies rose sharply and by September there were over 1,000 outstanding at the exchanges. Meanwhile the Minister of Labour was asked to do what he could to stimulate recruitment, and he instructed the juvenile employment officers and their committees to bring the needs of the mines to the attention of all suitable school leavers. The results were, however, very disappointing and part of the explanation was no doubt the active opposition of teachers in the mining areas, who were often the sons or daughters of miners, to the advocacy of mining as a career for their pupils. There was also the competition of other industries and notably building where high wages could be obtained. The Minister himself had no doubts that boys would not be attracted in greater numbers to the mines until the industry could offer them the prospects of a progressive career. They should also be medically examined at the time of

¹ See above pp. 185-186.

entry and subsequently at regular intervals. If after these improvements had been made the mines could still not compete favourably with other industries, then, he suggested, the question of raising the rates of juvenile wages would have to be faced.

The soundness of this diagnosis was recognised; but could the country afford to wait until these reforms had been introduced and would it not be necessary meanwhile to compel boys to work in the pits? The Minister was reluctant to adopt this suggestion. Having decided as a matter of policy not to direct young persons to employment, it would be difficult for him to justify directions applied specifically to work in the mines. His hesitations were confirmed when, at a conference with the two sides of the industry about the shortage of boys, one of the workers' representatives explicitly stated that he was not prepared to take part in the discussion, unless the Minister gave an assurance that compulsion would not be used. Although no promise was made that boys would never be directed, the Minister agreed to hold his hand while the industry was framing its own proposals. But when these proposals were forthcoming they added little of value, and in exasperation Mr. Bevin asked for, and obtained, an independent enquiry into the reasons why boys were reluctant to take up mining as their chosen career. A committee under Sir John Forster was set up in April 1942 and three months later it issued a first report.¹

Apart from proposals about training, the main recommendations in the report dealt with wages, medical examination and the provision of amenities. First, there should be a national minimum rate of wages for juveniles with appropriate differentiations for surface and underground work. Although the Committee made no suggestion about what the minimum level should be, in its second report—issued subsequently to an award made by the Greene Board²—it advised that this was a matter that should be left to be settled through the machinery of the industry. Secondly, there should be an independent but compulsory medical examination of all boys before entry into the industry and subsequently at yearly intervals until they reached adult status. This, it was suggested, should be the function of the proposed Mining Medical Service. Thirdly, baths at the pithead and canteens should be provided, and boys should be issued with pit suits, safety helmets and protective boots. The insistence in the report upon the need for better training reflected the long felt concern about the inadequacy of the existing arrangements. In the old days when coal was got by hand boys worked side by side with their fathers or brothers, but with the growth of mechanisation this personal supervision had become no longer

¹ *Committee on the Recruitment of Juveniles in the Coal-mining Industry, First Report*, 20th July 1942.

² This raised wages from 9d. a shift at fourteen to 1s. 6d. at seventeen for surface workers and from 1s. a shift at fourteen to 2s. 3d. at seventeen for underground work.

possible. A few groups of collieries, notably the Ashington Coal Company in Northumberland, had developed pioneering schemes with practical underground training in a non-productive section of the mine; but elsewhere, apart from some instruction on safety measures, little or nothing had been done. The Forster Committee made three recommendations. An initial period of eight weeks should be devoted to general instruction at a colliery centre or mining school and to practical demonstrations at a non-productive gallery underground. This should be followed by eight weeks spent working in a productive section reserved or worked for training purposes. Lastly, when boys were ready to go to the coal-face they should be given a period of six months on all relevant coal-face operations. The Minister of Fuel—whose Ministry had now superseded the old Mines Department—decided that these periods of training were longer than the present emergency would justify, and in November 1942 a much less ambitious scheme was launched. A minimum period of six weeks should be spent in theoretical and practical training before a boy was sent down the pits, and subsequently there should be 'proper instruction and supervision while learning any new job underground'.

These changes in wages and training did not increase the number of boys coming forward and in 1943 the average monthly numbers in employment were 4,000 less than in the preceding year. When the option given to National Service men at the time of their registration to choose the mines instead of the Armed Forces¹ also failed in its object, the Minister of Labour decided that the use of compulsion was the only practical way out. In December 1943 the Ballot Scheme, of which an account has been given in an earlier chapter,² started. It was followed by the Coalmining (Training and Medical) Order,³ which came into force on 1st February, 1944. This embodied the provision already made administratively by the Minister of Fuel that no one might be productively employed underground until he had had at least six weeks' training, and it further prescribed sixteen weeks' experience on other underground work before a boy was permitted to work at the face. On the medical side the Order initiated compulsory examination of boys under eighteen coming into the industry, but with the shortage of civilian doctors the proposal of the Forster Committee for the setting up of a Mining Medical Service had to be dropped, and the medical examinations were conducted by the Medical Boards set up under the National Service Acts.

(b) BUILDING

In the pre-war years the majority of the boys employed in the building industry were being trained as apprentices in one or more of the

¹ See above p. 186.

² See above pp. 252-255.

³ S.R. & O. 1944, No. 7.

crafts, either under indentures or by a less formal agreement with an employer. By contrast, as the war went on openings for apprentices steadily declined largely owing to the type of work which the industry was required to carry out. The larger contractors had to concentrate their resources on the speedy erection of buildings ordered by the Government or on the urgent repair of war damaged property, and they could not spare the time of skilled men for instructing apprentices. The small builders, who normally carried a majority of the apprentices in the industry, could not rely on keeping their skilled men, who were liable to be transferred to the bigger contractors for higher priority work. Moreover, the maintenance and jobbing work upon which they were largely engaged was not well suited for giving the learner a sound grounding in his craft. In 1942 the Ministry of Works' Central Council for Works and Buildings set up an Education Committee, on which the industry, professional organisations, government departments and local education authorities were represented, to enquire into the existing opportunities for vocational training, including apprenticeships, in the building and civil engineering industry and the instructional facilities that would be necessary to deal with a rapid expansion of the industry to meet post-war needs.¹ In its report the Committee emphasized that the best way of raising and maintaining craft standards in the industry was through apprenticeships, and recommended that the Ministry of Works should establish an apprenticeship and training council to advise on all matters concerning recruitment, education and training. This advice was accepted by the Government, and a White Paper issued jointly by the Ministers of Labour and Works in February 1943 announced that the proposed Council would shortly be set up.² In June of that year the Council, which consisted of no less than fifty-seven members, held its first meeting under the chairmanship of Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve, and wisely decided to delegate its main functions to a general purposes committee of twenty-five. Before, however, we go on to describe the outcome of its deliberations, we must go back in time and deal shortly with a quite different question affecting the employment of boys in the building industry, which in the early years of the war occasioned considerable disquietude.

In the course of 1940-41 owing to the shortage of adult workers a large number of boys were employed as labourers partly on constructional sites and partly on the clearance of bomb débris. That they were doing useful work was not disputed; what alarmed the juvenile employment officers and their committees was the high wages that the boys were paid and the unsatisfactory conditions in which many of them were working and living. Boys of sixteen and seventeen, it was

¹ See C. M. Kohan: *Works and Buildings*, p. 406.

² *Training for the Building Industry* (Cmd. 6428).

reported, were earning from £4 to £6 15s. a week, and even 'tea' boys were getting between £3 and £5, although part of this represented tips from the men workers. Furthermore, many boys were employed on work that was dirty, dangerous and too heavy for their years and, what was worse, were sometimes obliged to share camps and hostels with men with low standards of morality and cleanliness. This combination of high wages and bad influence was leading boys, it was alleged, into vicious habits and inciting them to commit offences. That it was detrimental to their development for boys to be employed upon work that offered no preparation for a steady career and at the same time put too much money in their pockets cannot be gainsaid; but investigations which were made, at Birmingham for example, failed to establish any clear causal connection between high wages and delinquency. Perhaps the worst feature of the lure of high wages was the difficulty of getting boys to take other suitable, but less highly-paid, jobs where they would be making an equally good, if not better, contribution to the war effort.

Various attempts were made to rectify the situation, about which the industry no less than the Government was perturbed. An agreed scale of wage rates according to age was introduced in November 1941, under which boys of fifteen were limited to two-fifths, boys of sixteen to a half and boys of seventeen to three-quarters of an adult labourer's wage.¹ But this did not greatly improve matters, as some employers treated the new rates as minima and often paid more. More effective was a decision reached a year later to limit by legislation the weekly hours worked by boys to forty-eight for those under sixteen and to fifty-four for the sixteen and seventeen-year-olds.² This got closer to the root of the trouble, because it was the amount of overtime rather than the rate of wages that was mainly responsible for the high earnings. About the same time administrative arrangements were made under the Restriction on Engagement and the Restriction on Transference Orders, by which the employment of boys under sixteen was prohibited absolutely on demolition, steel salvage and débris clearance work and, where it involved living away from home, on specified types of contracts—which included all civil engineering, underground work and employment on sites where the boys had to be accommodated in camps. In London local authorities were asked not to employ any youths under eighteen on débris clearance and, when during the flying-bomb phase juveniles with adult workers flocked in from the provinces, hostel managers were asked to refuse accommodation to those under eighteen, most of whom had in consequence to return home.

¹ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, December 1941, p. 234.

² Building and Engineering Works of Construction (Young Persons) Order (S.R. & O. 1942, No. 2269).

By this combination of devices order and discipline were gradually reimposed.

We may now return to the plans that were being made for the future recruitment and training of boys for the industry. At the end of 1943 the Building Apprenticeship Training Council issued its first report. In the selection of apprentices it recommended that preference should be given to boys who had taken courses on building at technical schools, and that the Education Departments should promote an increase of these facilities. In the summer of 1944 about 1,500 boys from technical schools would be ready to enter apprenticeships, but it would be difficult for all of them to find employers in their home areas who were prepared to accept them. The Council, accordingly, suggested that the Ministry of Labour should facilitate their transfer to other areas, where apprenticeships were available, by providing financial assistance during the early months of their training. This proposal did not, however, commend itself to the department, which argued that it would be improper to single out one industry for special treatment, and that the question of assisted transfers must be left to be decided in the light of post-war policy for industry as a whole. By the spring of 1944 the Council had come to the conclusion that, even if some financial way was found of enabling boys to serve their apprenticeships away from their homes, this alone would not be sufficient. On a review of prospects it seemed most unlikely that there would be enough apprenticeships for boys coming from technical schools, let alone the additional numbers of other school leavers who might want to enter the industry. Consequently, if these unapprenticed boys did succeed in getting into the industry, they might get no training at all or their experience might be limited to maintenance and make-shift jobs, which would give them a false idea of the speed and quality of work which would be required of them in the future. In the long run the industry no less than the boys would suffer. The Council, accordingly, proposed that the Government should sponsor a special building programme of hostels, schools and hospitals for local authorities to be carried out by apprentices.

The main features of the scheme, which was known as the Apprentice Master Scheme, were as follows. An apprentice master (a master builder) would be commissioned to undertake a particular contract and would appoint craftsmen to train and direct the work of apprentices, who would be engaged under a formal apprenticeship. All traditional building crafts were to be covered and the boy would work on other crafts than the one to which he was apprenticed when at any stage of the building there was no work available in his own trade. Local joint apprenticeship committees would be responsible for overseeing the apprentices' training. The finance of the scheme with its administrative charges was to be borne by the Ministry of Works,

which would pay the excess in cost of buildings erected by apprentices over the cost with a normal complement of workers. To the Ministry of Labour would fall the responsibility for arranging for the accommodation and welfare of apprentices who had to live away from home. The plan was enthusiastically welcomed by the Minister of Labour, who liked the idea of a well-organised apprenticeship scheme centrally controlled and backed by both sides of the industry. Despite some misgivings by Lord Portal, the Minister of Works, the scheme was approved in September 1944, and in November an explanatory memorandum was sent by the Ministry of Health to local housing authorities and county councils. From then onwards it was left to local joint apprenticeship committees, in consultation with local authorities and the Ministry of Works, to stimulate local building programmes, on the understanding that no proposal would be authorised, if in the area there were ordinary apprenticeships available to boys who wanted them. This condition emphasized that the Apprentice Master Scheme was in no sense a substitute for normal industrial apprenticeships; its sole purpose was to provide training that for the time being could not otherwise be obtained. It was some months before any local schemes had been submitted and approved, but by the end of the European war boys were at work on ambitious housing programmes at Norwich and Cardiff and on smaller projects in some half-dozen other towns. For those apprentices who had to live away from home allowances were paid on a scale which, after taking their wages into account, left them with a reasonable amount of weekly pocket money.

The Apprentice Master Scheme had only just begun when the war ended and it continued in operation till 1952. It is, therefore, for the historian of the post-war years to appreciate its value, but a few observations will not be out of place. The testimony of experts leaves no doubt about the quality of the training, and the actual building that the apprentices did received in the press general and unsolicited praise. Moreover, although the numbers in training with apprentice masters were each year on an average only about one-tenth of those in normal apprenticeships and by 1952 totalled 7,446, without the scheme most of these boys would have been lost to the industry as potential craftsmen. On the other side of the balance must be set the cost of the whole project which was in the neighbourhood of £2 million. Whether this was too high a price to pay for training, and it may be for making a career for a few thousand boys, is a question which no doubt will continue to be differently answered.

(v)

Plans for Post-War Industrial Training

The close attention which has been given to the special measures that were taken while the war was still going on to attract more boys to the mines and to increase the opportunities for apprenticeships in the building crafts might perhaps prompt the conclusion that until fighting was over no thought was devoted to the future of the many other industries that habitually employed large numbers of juveniles. This was very far from the case. As early as April 1942 the Minister of Labour with his two Education colleagues at a meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee drew attention to the many problems relating to the industrial training and technical education of young workers that would be likely to arise in the post-war years. In Great Britain, they pointed out, pre-employment training of a vocational character had not been developed to the same extent as in some other countries, and the system of apprenticeships or learnerships had not been adjusted so as to make full use of the increased facilities of technical education. There were also wider questions affecting the employment of adolescents which ought to be freshly examined. Should boys and girls, for example, be left free to choose and take up the work they fancied, and should there be some recognised method of supervising their progress during the early months of their training and employment in industry? These were problems that should be looked into by officials of the Government departments concerned in collaboration with industry. This proposal was welcomed by both sides of the Joint Consultative Committee, who agreed to appoint representatives to a sub-committee charged with the duty of preparing a memorandum that would focus attention on the points requiring the consideration of individual industries. When completed, this was first sent to a small number of selected industries and the favourable tone of the replies led the sub-committee in the summer of 1943 to decide that a similar document, amended in the light of information so far obtained from the sample enquiry, should be more widely circulated in industry. This took the form of a questionnaire and each industry was invited to state whether, for example, it was ready to lay down minimum standard conditions for the employment of its young workers, whether it was in favour of a strengthened juvenile employment service and, in greater detail, what plans it had for developing facilities for training and technical education whether by apprenticeship or otherwise. Obviously replies to this questionnaire could not be expected in any great number for many months to come; industry had many other more urgent problems to tackle. The sub-committee, accordingly, submitted in December 1944

to the Joint Consultative Committee a progress report, and made a number of recommendations about the local organisation of the juvenile employment service, the wider distribution of information about industrial employment, and the training and supervision of young workers. Meanwhile the Minister of Labour had decided that the time was opportune for an investigation into the working of the juvenile employment service and the possibility of increasing its efficiency and acceptability, and on 1st January 1945 a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Godfrey Ince was set up.

(vi)

The Committee on the Juvenile Employment Service

The Committee, which included with Government officials an equal number of representatives of industry and education, was asked to consider the measures necessary to establish a comprehensive juvenile employment service. Although its report¹ was not submitted until December 1945—and therefore falls outside the time limits of this volume—its deliberations were already far advanced when the war ended. For this reason, and because some of the recommendations the Committee made were designed to correct weaknesses in the service to which we have already called attention, this chapter would be incomplete without some account of the main conclusions that emerged. We shall first give a short description of what the Committee considered should be the principles on which the juvenile employment service should be carried on and developed, and we shall then refer to the administrative changes that it advocated.

The purpose of a juvenile employment service, the Committee emphasised, is to help boys and girls in their passage from school into the working world, to assist them to choose the career or occupation in which they will find satisfaction and opportunity for developing their capacities, and to watch over their progress and welfare in the early years of employment. If it is to fulfil these aims, it must begin its work while boys and girls are still at school and it must continue to be at their disposal from the time they enter employment until they reach an age at which they can be confidently left to fend for themselves. The first and most important function of the service is thus vocational guidance, which should be given, preferably at school, some little time before a boy or girl is due to leave. This should be carried out in two stages—the school talk and the personal interview. The object of the former should be to arouse a general interest in the question of a career and to lead a child to examine his own capacities and desires.

¹ *Report of the Committee on the Juvenile Employment Service* published by H.M. Stationery Office, 1945.

It should, therefore, give a broad and balanced picture of the different kinds of suitable employment and should not concentrate merely upon local occupations or seek to bias the audience in any particular direction. For this reason it would be best given by the juvenile employment officer, who by his training would have acquired a wide knowledge of employment and could be trusted to maintain an impartial attitude. The second and the vital stage would be the interview between the juvenile employment officer and the child. This should be intimate and private with no one else present except the parent and the teacher. Consistently with the importance which it attached to vocational guidance the Committee made two new proposals, each of which entailed legislation. First, to ensure that each child obtained vocational guidance before leaving school—and so make the juvenile employment service generally comprehensive—every school should be required by statute to register with the service every school leaver and every boy or girl of seventeen if still in school. Secondly, in order that the juvenile employment officer might learn as much as possible about the child before advising him about his career, the school authority should place at the officer's confidential disposal information about the child on seven essential matters—his health, intelligence, educational attainments, aptitudes, interests and character together with any special circumstances in his home life. This would be best done by passing on the school record or a digest of it, provided that the latter contained the requisite data. These were the only compulsory measures which the Committee recommended.

The second function of the service is to place the juvenile in employment. The Committee rejected the view that all boys and girls should be obliged to obtain their employment through the juvenile employment service, and employers to seek and obtain young workers only through the same agency. It believed that, if vocational guidance had been well given, most of those who had received it would naturally turn to the juvenile employment officer for help in finding suitable jobs. In order that there should not be a waste of potential talent it recommended that a scheme of allowances should be worked out by which boys and girls with a marked aptitude for a particular trade, if the requisite training was not available within daily travelling distance of their homes, should be transferred to a suitable employer in another area. The third and last responsibility of the service is to maintain touch with young workers when they have entered upon employment, in order that misfits may be corrected and a general eye kept on their progress and welfare. It was optimistically supposed by the Committee that many boys and girls would as a matter of course come back and see the juvenile employment officer who had given them vocational guidance, but it also suggested that the practice of 'open evenings', to which young workers should be invited and where they would meet

the juvenile employment officer and members of his advisory committee, should be continued and developed.

On the administrative side the Committee was unanimous that the existing dual system, under which in some parts of the country the juvenile employment service was operated by education authorities and in others by the Ministry of Labour, would never be wholly satisfactory, and it would be much better if throughout the country the local work was done by one organisation. It was, however, precluded by its terms of reference from making any recommendation on whether this should be the Ministry of Labour or the education authorities. It, therefore, concentrated its attention on the best ways of providing greater harmony and efficiency and of obviating sudden or frequent changes in local responsibility. Its main proposals were as follows. Any education authority that wished to exercise its powers to provide a juvenile employment service must submit to the Minister of Labour a scheme, which should cover the whole and not as hitherto any selected part of its area, within six months of the passing of the necessary legislation, and must put its scheme into operation within six months of the date of its submission. Secondly, education authorities in Scotland, who had hitherto not had the powers possessed by their counterparts in England and Wales, should subject to the same conditions be enabled to provide and operate the service in their areas. Thus it was contemplated that in a matter of twelve months from the date on which the royal assent was given to the new legislation the localities in which the education authorities and the Ministry of Labour would be respectively operating the service would be permanently settled, subject only to the power which the Minister would retain to rescind his approval of an education authority's scheme, if he was satisfied that it was not being operated thoroughly and efficiently. With regard to the central control of the juvenile employment service the Committee proposed an interesting experiment in administration. In order that the two interests of the service—education and employment—should receive full consideration, they recommended that within the Ministry of Labour there should be set up a central juvenile employment executive, staffed by officers from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Scottish Education Department, for which the Minister of Labour should be responsible to Parliament. The duties of the executive would embrace all matters affecting the service and would include the examination and the determination of questions of policy, the approval of schemes submitted by education authorities, and the inspection of the local operation of the service whether run by an authority or the Ministry itself. For this last purpose a team of specially trained inspectors would be appointed. Lastly, there should be set up by statute a national juvenile employment council with separate committees for Scotland and Wales, whose membership would

include representatives of education authorities, teachers, employers and workers under an independent chairman. The duty of the council and its committees would be to consider any questions referred to them by the Minister and to make recommendations on any matters which were calculated to promote the greater efficiency of the service.

Most of the recommendations of the Ince Committee were accepted and duly put into operation, with two important exceptions. Under pressure from certain political and religious quarters it was decided not to make vocational guidance compulsory and to limit the information about school leavers, which the school authorities were obliged to place at the disposal of the service, to facts about their health, intelligence, education attainments and aptitudes. Thus the juvenile employment service was to remain, as it always had been, a voluntary service, and in giving vocational guidance, in which a knowledge of the personality, interests and home life of a boy or girl must often play an important part, the juvenile employment officer had to rely upon the personal interview for obtaining this information, without being able to command the assistance of teachers who were in the best position to give it. Nevertheless, within these imposed limitations the service was put in a position in which it could develop its activities without the acrimony between the Ministry and the education authorities which had tended in the past to impede its progress.

Table 30: Estimated numbers of insured persons aged 14-17 engaged in certain industries at July of each year 1938-1945 (Great Britain)

(i) BOYS

Industry	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Agriculture	48,720	46,560	44,720	48,900	51,180	53,690	55,020	55,470
Coal-mining	75,060	70,320	73,170	67,220	59,200	52,400	43,780	35,030
General engineering	78,540	76,200	95,170	101,910	104,740	101,070	88,080	74,530
Motor vehicles, cycles, aircraft	47,650	59,030	54,600	64,630	68,070	70,850	67,200	59,530
Textiles	46,080	42,460	45,950	37,200	29,960	27,120	24,960	23,230
Furniture making	22,140	18,520	13,600	9,500	9,260	8,370	8,670	10,020
Building	75,580	67,770	46,380	61,710	60,780	57,150	59,700	82,270
Printing, etc.	28,060	26,910	19,940	15,350	15,160	15,440	16,050	16,840
Railway service	16,070	12,880	16,410	20,480	21,740	23,730	27,180	26,460
Distributive trades	270,570	252,910	227,390	195,010	167,570	146,640	136,350	138,460
National and local government service	21,340	19,970	27,400	37,520	39,630	36,120	32,870	30,830
Commerce and professional services	33,470	30,330	31,300	28,770	28,400	25,320	25,320	25,110
Other industries	429,540	402,140	406,970	408,800	400,310	382,690	358,880	347,220
TOTAL	1,192,800	1,117,000	1,103,000	1,097,000	1,056,000	1,002,000	944,000	925,000

(ii) GIRLS

General engineering	14,720	14,900	20,850	31,080	40,100	40,980	35,060	27,090
Textiles	123,210	115,350	120,910	100,800	81,740	73,050	65,490	62,020
Tailoring	41,820	44,130	48,430	49,280	39,650	41,090	35,640	34,640
Dressmaking	23,950	21,400	17,450	12,450	11,410	12,490	13,430	15,650
Shirts, collars, hats, etc.	36,140	33,270	33,190	27,720	22,120	22,150	19,880	20,190
Food and drink	65,680	63,230	56,920	53,780	49,890	43,520	43,040	42,750
Printing, etc.	34,350	25,050	25,050	19,050	18,310	17,440	18,760	20,210
Distributive trades	224,600	216,750	222,110	226,500	257,090	258,520	258,160	264,470
National and local government service	13,570	14,720	22,900	36,790	43,110	50,720	52,130	51,250
Commerce and professional services	30,240	31,560	34,050	38,730	44,100	47,700	50,180	50,830
Hotel and boarding house service	33,600	31,600	25,480	24,840	25,510	26,950	27,460	28,590
Laundry service	40,050	36,860	32,610	30,380	24,950	21,510	17,890	15,290
Other industries	262,620	248,780	259,050	276,600	284,020	281,880	264,880	245,020
TOTAL	944,500	905,000	919,000	928,000	942,000	938,000	902,000	878,000

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service

CHAPTER XXII

TRAINING OF WORKERS

IN THE conversion of industry from its peace-time activities into a great arsenal supplying the rapidly growing and frequently changing requirements of the Armed Forces the chief labour hurdle that had to be surmounted was the shortage of skilled workers. However successful the steps that might be taken to redistribute the available supply to the best national advantage, there would still be insufficient to do the jobs which were customarily regarded as calling for the skill of a fully trained man. Moreover, as the period of apprenticeship lasted from five to six years, the normal method of replenishing the ranks of the skilled craftsmen was in the emergency of little avail. If, then, the number of skilled men could not be increased, the only practical way out of the impasse was to see that they were employed exclusively on work that only a skilled man could do. To this end jobs would have to be broken down and those parts of them that entailed less skill would have to be carried out by upgrading workers with some productive experience and giving them the requisite training. For the simpler repetitive processes, for which as production got into its stride additional workers would be required, inexperienced labour would have to be engaged and given some preliminary instruction before being assigned to particular machines.

The need for these improvisations, in which training was an essential ingredient, was not, however, immediately recognised. At the beginning of the war and for some months thereafter it was apparently thought that the supply of skilled men would, if properly distributed, prove to be adequate. Some employers were, however, more far-sighted and began to introduce schemes of dilution, but the majority temporised until the impossibility of finding the skilled labour they wanted drove them to reorganise their methods of production. At a later stage, when inexperienced labour had to be extensively engaged, there was also a tendency to curtail or even dispense with preliminary training on the grounds that with the pressure to step up production instructors could not be spared for teaching what, it was alleged, could be as well acquired by going straight on to a job. The lesson was sometimes slowly learned that the time spent in training new workers and familiarising them with their strange surroundings was more than compensated by the speed and efficiency they acquired.

Because of the large numbers involved it was clear that most training

would have to be given by employers in their own establishments and, apart from the necessity, this system had its advantages. Workers would be taught by instructors belonging to the same factory and their training could be biased to suit the particular type of production upon which the firm was engaged. Moreover, an employer might be expected to take a closer interest in the training of workers whom, if they turned out satisfactory, he would in the general shortage of labour be anxious to retain in his employment. These advantages on the whole outweighed the disadvantages that the training given by employers might be so narrow and specialised that, if a worker had subsequently to move, the skill which he had acquired would not immediately fit him for a comparable job in another factory. To avoid this danger, the Ministry of Labour constantly pressed upon employers the desirability of giving workers a preliminary general training before passing them on to more specialised instruction. There was, however, another difficulty to be overcome. Whereas employers with large factories and establishments could readily provide courses on their own premises with their own tools and materials and with instructors selected from their own staff, for the smaller firms this was virtually impossible. They had neither the space nor the material resources, nor with a small staff could they afford to take away skilled men from production to act as instructors. It was largely to meet this situation that it was decided to provide at training centres, financed and run by the Ministry of Labour, courses designed to give a sound preliminary training in trades which were required for the output of munitions and for which there was a shortage of workers. In this way it was hoped that, when on the completion of their courses trainees were allotted to an employer, they would with only a short amount of additional instruction quickly master the particular refinements in processing that were in operation.

The main purpose of this chapter is to give an account of the schemes of training that were sponsored by the Ministry of Labour during the war, where they were provided and how they were conducted, and to assess the value of the contribution that they made.

(i)

Basic Training at G.T.C.s.

The Government Training Centres, at which most of the industrial training under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour was carried out during the war, developed historically from the centres that had been set up in 1925 to give training in a number of trades to unemployed men from the industrially depressed areas. Intended solely as a palliative for unemployment, these earlier centres had hardly survived

the years of depression, but with improvement in trade it had been possible in 1935 to expand and develop their facilities. By the beginning of 1939 sixteen were open and at them training was provided for two categories of men—soldiers within six months of completing their military service who were taught trades which they might follow on their discharge, and unemployed civilians. The syllabus was varied to match industrial demands and, when the rearmament programme got under way, the number of places reserved for training for engineering occupations was increased at the expense of those allocated for the building trades. When the war broke out the soldiers in training returned to their units, but in October the War Office asked the Ministry of Labour if it would to the utmost of its capacity help to train selected soldiers to become Service tradesmen. Four centres with 2,400 places were, accordingly, earmarked as ‘soldier centres’ and further places were reserved in some of the civilian centres. By February 1940 arrangements had been made for receiving 4,000 soldiers—which was the equivalent of an annual output of 12,000 trainees.

On the civilian side training centres continued after the war had begun to cater only for the unemployed. There were two main reasons for this policy. First, with the curtailment of some peace-time trades the number of unemployed had risen sharply and, secondly, the need for the Government to provide facilities for training men already in employment preparatory to transferring them to munitions work had not yet been recognised as a matter of urgency. True, the War Cabinet on the recommendation of the Wolfe Report had decided in December 1939 that the number of Government Training Centres should be increased,¹ but the extent to which this should be carried out was left in abeyance until the Ministry of Labour had explored the practical possibilities. Apart from the difficulties it met in finding premises and obtaining machine tools and instructors, the Ministry were at this time of the opinion that the amount of help which training centres could give would in any case be very limited. The proper place for industrial training was in employers’ establishments and, as this was a matter that closely concerned managements, it was—in accordance with the demarcation of functions laid down by the Committee of Imperial Defence—for the supply departments, and not for the Ministry of Labour, to stimulate action and report progress. Shortly before the change of Administration in May 1940 this attitude of the Ministry of Labour was challenged by the supply departments, and a recommendation was put to the War Cabinet that in future the Ministry of Labour should be made responsible not merely, as hitherto, for the supply of labour but also for its economic use, including the provision

¹ See above pp. 64 and 76.

of training for workers.¹ Before, however, a decision was reached the Government had fallen, and under the new Administration the Minister of Labour was vested with the full control of manpower. Apart from the responsibility placed upon him to increase the supply of trained workers, the new Minister was himself a convinced believer in the benefits to be derived from well conceived and efficiently conducted courses of instruction. Not only did he think that while the war lasted training was essential, but he looked to it as the best means of helping men and women, when their war service was over, to resettle themselves satisfactorily in civilian life. It was thus with the full encouragement and support of its Minister that the Ministry embarked upon its new responsibilities.

An immediate decision was taken to increase the number of Government Training Centres. In the absence of any reliable information about the number of semi-skilled workers that would be likely to be required for munitions, the scale on which the expansion of the Centres should be made was obviously a matter of conjecture. A target of forty Centres was, however, set and by the end of 1940 thirty-five were actually open. The task of equipping them to receive trainees was formidable. There was a general shortage of machine tools, and it was but natural that those which could be extracted from firms not directly engaged upon war work were allocated for munitions production. It was only after a special appeal by the Minister himself to the Production Council that Government Training Centres were given a place on the priority list, and some of their deficiencies were made good. The second problem was to obtain a sufficient number of qualified instructors. Appeals were made to skilled men to offer their services, but the response was discouraging. It was not, of course, surprising that employers were loth to part with valuable skilled men and that the men themselves were disinclined to give up well-paid jobs. In July 1940 there were 1,044 instructors in posts and it was calculated that, if, as was intended, the shift system was freely operated in the Centres, an additional 1,300 would be required. The Minister, accordingly, decided that labour supply inspectors should go round engineering firms and select suitable men and, if they or their employers were unreasonable in their opposition, directions should be issued. In this way the supply was increased, but the difficulty of getting enough instructors of the right kind persisted throughout the war.

Soon after the decision to expand their capacity the Minister made a number of important changes in the conditions of admission to the Centres. Eligibility was no longer to be confined to the unemployed. In future, men who were above the age of liability for military service or who at their medical examinations had been placed in Grades III or IV were, if they were not already on work of national importance,

¹ See above p. 85.

to be free to apply to be accepted, and a little later boys of sixteen and over were also brought into the field of eligibility. Thus the training provided by the Ministry at its Centres ceased to be merely a means of relieving unemployment and became an integral part of the industrial mobilisation for war. The immediate result of the decision was gratifying. By the third week of June 1940 3,600 men had applied for training and 9,300 were under instruction. At the beginning of August the number of trainees had risen to over 14,000 and six weeks later there was a waiting list of about 6,000. There were two main reasons for this eagerness to apply for training. The curtailment of less essential industries was throwing men out of employment and the munitions industries were not yet ready to absorb any considerable number of inexperienced workers. Consequently, training at a Centre was for many a convenient means of keeping the wolf from the door and at the same time of preparing for a better-paid job. But in the late autumn the situation was changing. In December the Minister informed his Labour Supply Board that, while there were facilities for an intake of between three and four thousand a week at the Centres, for some time less than 2,000 applicants had been coming forward. By the end of the year the weekly intake had dropped as low as 1,100. The same causes which had in the summer produced a good supply of volunteers were now operating in reverse. Employers in the munitions industries were now eagerly looking for labour and were offering good wages. It was not, therefore, unnatural that many men should fall for this bait rather than be content to train for three or four months on a small subsistence allowance with the prospect of a more skilled, but not necessarily a much better-paid, job when their courses were completed.

In the hope of increasing the number of applicants for training two further changes were introduced at the beginning of 1941. Women and girls of sixteen and over were made eligible for admission to classes, at first at selected, and by the end of the year at all, Training Centres. The general intention was that they should be recruited locally so that they could live at home and after completing their training go into local employment. Boarders living in lodgings were, however, accepted, if they were willing and able to take employment subsequently in any part of the country. As dilution in the engineering industry would more and more involve the employment of women, some preliminary training in, for example, machine operating would, it was felt by the Ministry, enhance their marketable value and make employers more favourable to the idea of engaging women for jobs that they tended to regard as suitable only for men. Moreover, as women were at the time comparatively free to choose their own employment, it was hoped that many would be attracted by the opportunity afforded by training of fitting themselves to do work which could not be performed by rule of thumb but called for some practical

skill. The second reform affected the basis of remuneration for trainees at the Centres. During the early months of the war when the Centres were open to the unemployed only, those accepted for training had been paid in addition to unemployment insurance benefit a small allowance. When in May 1940 suitable men already in employment were made eligible for admission to the Centres, they were paid, irrespective of their means, allowances which would put them in the same position as those who were entitled to unemployment insurance benefit. In September the payment of benefit to persons in training ceased and all taking courses, whether employed or unemployed, were paid special training allowances, which were an increase on the former rates. In March 1941 it was decided to drop this system of allowances and to substitute payment by wages. Men over nineteen, and from the beginning of 1942 women over eighteen years of age, received wages which were broadly equivalent to those paid to new entrants in industry and, subsequently, their rates were raised to correspond with increases granted to workers in the engineering industry. Moreover, to encourage trainees to acquire skill rapidly, a system of increments dependent upon the passing of tests was also introduced in 1941. The intention of this major change in policy is obvious: its prudence is not so certain. It may be that a graded system of allowances, adjusted to meet the particular needs of individual trainees according as they were married or single, would have proved more beneficial. As it was, a flat rate of wages for all trainees was almost certainly too low to attract a married man and was perhaps an unnecessarily generous bait to the single applicant.

Besides extending eligibility to women and introducing, as it was hoped, more attractive terms of remuneration the Ministry of Labour made full use of publicity to disseminate the advantages of training. Articles appeared in the national and local press; films were shown describing the syllabus and the methods of instruction at the Centres; and broadcast appeals were made for volunteers. Four new Centres were opened during 1941—making with the closing of one a total of thirty-eight, which was not far short of the target set.¹ This expansion carried with it the problem of ensuring that the staff were technically abreast of their subjects and were able to impart their knowledge to their pupils. A special course was, accordingly, designed with the two-fold object of demonstrating the method by which instruction should be given at the Centres and of bringing up to date the technical knowledge of the instructors. The first course was held in June and proved such a popular success that the experiment was repeated in November and continued in the following year. All these efforts were rewarded by a substantial increase in the numbers applying and accepted for

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946 (Cmd 7225), p. 102.*

training, but by the late summer with the growing opportunities for employment the situation was again causing anxiety. Nor was it only the intake of civilians that was low: the number of places reserved at the four military centres for the Army were only about a quarter filled. Moreover, in response to a suggestion by the Ministry of Labour that the Centres should train soldiers for their Service trades on a greater scale than in 1940, the Secretary of State for War made it plain that, so far from requiring further places to be earmarked, the Army would be doing its own training and would only occasionally wish to avail itself of the Ministry's facilities. This discouragement was in part offset by a request from the Admiralty for training for Naval ratings in fitting and turning. Courses lasting sixteen weeks were set up at five Centres and during 1941 over a thousand ratings attended.¹ Despite these ups and downs the total number of persons including Service personnel who completed courses of training in Government Training Centres during 1941 was close on 75,000, as compared with less than 30,000 for 1940.² Nevertheless, the available places were only three-quarters filled. At the end of the year the Ministry of Labour, therefore, decided to hold an enquiry into the type of training that was being given at the Centres, with a view to considering whether some modifications were desirable to make the courses that were provided more widely acceptable.

Since May 1940, when it was decided to expand the facilities of Training Centres, the aim of the classes in engineering was to provide those attending with a grounding in basic principles and to give them a sound training in the application of this knowledge. The system was highly intensive and combined theory and practice. Courses were offered in the following subjects: draughtsmanship, fitting, instrument making, machine operating, sheet metal working and welding both electric and oxy-acetylene. The length of most of these courses was from three to four months, but those on instrument making averaged from twenty to twenty-six weeks and those on draughtsmanship lasted about nine months. Normally a course began with some general preliminary instruction before the trainees were passed on to a more specialised section of the subject. Thus, for example, those taking classes in machine operating were started off with three weeks' general machine instruction, with the twofold purpose of inculcating machine sense and of determining to which type of machine—lathe, capstan, milling and grinding—they should subsequently be drafted for their more specialised training. On a similar principle, draughtsmanship trainees spent three months in the workshops of the different sections of the Training Centres before entering the drawing office. The Centres were laid out on the lines of commercial workshops and some

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

of the training was given by putting the trainees on to the production of articles ordered or intended for sale. This system had several advantages. It enabled the Centres to make a small but useful contribution to production; in 1941 50,000 articles valued at £21,000 were manufactured.¹ The payment received helped to defray the cost of running the Centres and, most important of all, the knowledge that they were making things that would be used was a stimulus to the trainees and a welcome relief from the dull routine of exercises.

The whole scheme of training was thus designed in the belief that on completing their courses men and women would have acquired sufficient self-confidence and adaptability to enable them when they entered employment to work up quickly to a higher degree of skill. With this concentration on the production of skill the Centres, which it was wishfully hoped would be filled to capacity, were not in 1940 and 1941 called upon to provide preliminary classes to equip those taking them to carry out simple repetitive processes. This need was otherwise cared for. Under what was known as the Emergency Training Scheme arrangements were made by the Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with the Board of Education and the Scottish Education Department, for the provision of suitable classes at technical colleges and commercial schools. While the tuition given was in the hands of the staffs of the colleges and schools, the Ministry of Labour was responsible for the recruitment of trainees, for the payment of their fees and meals, and for placing them in employment at the end of their training. The scheme, which began to operate in June 1940, was a success and in 1941—which was the peak year for training—some 40,000 persons, two-thirds of whom were women, passed through courses successfully.² A second scheme, called the Auxiliary Training Scheme, which was introduced in December 1940, was by comparison a failure. The plan was that employers with ample facilities should undertake on a fixed scale of remuneration to train over and above their own requirements workers who, on the completion of their instruction, would be made available to other employers who had not similar training facilities. The idea was, however, not well received; perhaps it was pitching altruism a bit too high. In the latter half of 1941 the terms were modified under Auxiliary Training Scheme No. 2, and employers who provided the training were given the option of retaining, if they wished, in their own employment the persons whom they had trained: but this additional bait did not do much to popularise the scheme.³

The enquiry made by the Ministry of Labour convinced it that some changes would have to be introduced in the type of training given at

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

³ *Ibid.* p. 106.

Training Centres. Many employers had made it clear that, when time was the crucial factor, the courses were in their judgement too long, too general and too theoretical, and one explanation of why the Centres were not full might well be that the demand for the kind of courses which they were providing had been over-estimated. A similar conclusion was drawn by the Select Committee on National Expenditure. As it put it in its Report: 'What the employer mainly wants is someone capable of working and setting up one of the particular kinds of machines he uses, not a man with some experience of several machines but requiring further training before he is a competent setter-up of any one of them'.¹ The Ministry of Labour, accordingly, decided that a greater degree of elasticity was required in the training given, and the following changes were introduced. Whereas most courses in engineering subjects, with the exception of those for draughtsmanship, hitherto had lasted about sixteen weeks, in future a basic course would be given to all trainees lasting from four to eight weeks only. No trainee would be kept on longer at the Centre, unless he had shown special capacity which suggested that he would profit by a longer course, say of sixteen weeks, and would on the completion of his training be competent to undertake work requiring a considerable degree of skill. Similarly, the courses in draughtsmanship—for which women were now made eligible, at first at the Slough Centre only and then at all other Centres—were reduced to sixteen weeks with the possibility for the more promising pupils of taking the extended course of thirty-nine weeks. Under the new system the bulk of the trainees would thus be given a preliminary grounding that would fit them to undertake readily the normal kind of repetitive work, but there would still be an opportunity for others to receive the fuller training upon which hitherto the Centres had concentrated. It was hoped that this change of policy would make training at the Centres more acceptable to employers and, by increasing the demand, would stimulate recruitment. Even so it was recognised that the existing capacity of the Centres was never likely to be filled, and it was accordingly decided to reduce the available places from the current 48,000 to 30,000 under the system of working three shifts in machine operating and two in all other courses except draughtsmanship. As the War Office no longer intended to make any considerable use of the Centres for training soldiers for Service trades, the four soldier centres were first closed. The number of civilian centres was then cut down by stages till in May 1942 there were only twenty-five centres left open.² Even these reduced facilities proved, however, to be considerably in excess of requirements, and before long it was made clear that in any case their capacity had

¹ *Seventh Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, Session 1941-1942*, para. 49-50.

² *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 107.

been over-estimated. Although there was sufficient accommodation and equipment, there were not enough instructors to cope on the shift system with as many as 30,000 trainees. In October 1942, accordingly, a new calculation was made and the maximum number of available places was fixed at 21,300—which at the time was nearly 4,000 more than the actual numbers in training. Nevertheless, it was not thought wise to close any more Centres. With the prospect of large numbers of men being called up from munitions to the Armed Forces, it was most desirable that the Ministry of Labour should not be put in the position in which it was unable to offer as replacements women with some degree of training, and at this stage of the war it was from women that most of the future trainees would have to be found. Policy, therefore, concentrated on attracting more women to the Centres. To this end increasing numbers of mobile women were allowed to take courses on the understanding that they would be subsequently sent to employment in whatever part of the country they were required, and immobile women living in areas where there was no Centre were encouraged to go away for their training and on its completion return to employment in their home districts. Publicity was also used to try to convince women that their value as munitions workers would be much greater if they first took some training. Although these devices did not fill the Centres to capacity, they did succeed in keeping up the number of engineering trainees to a reasonably satisfactory level for so long as this was required. The Centres also continued to provide training for the Services. Pontefract was converted into a Naval rating centre, and provision was also made at another Centre for teaching members of the W.R.N.S. the elements of electrical work. Moreover, despite the prognostications of the War Office, some hundreds of soldiers and a few women from the A.T.S. took courses in fitting and machine operating in 1942, and in the following year training was also given for armourers and engine hands.¹

During 1943 the demand for engineering training sensibly declined and in many Centres there was a reversion to single shifts. One new Centre was opened; six were closed. Towards the end of the year when there was an all-out drive to produce bombers, the engineering courses were modified to meet the special requirements of aircraft manufacturers. With this crisis successfully surmounted and mobilisation of manpower already past its peak, the number of places for engineering trainees was in 1944 substantially reduced, and at the Centres there was a swing-over to more diversified types of training. The progressive fall in the numbers completing engineering courses from the high level of 1941 and the preponderance of women over men in the years 1942-3 may be seen from Table 31.²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

Table 31: Engineering courses completed, 1941-1944

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
1941	65,545	9,330	74,875
1942	32,217	39,341	71,558
1943	28,734	32,928	61,662
1944	19,542	11,013	30,555

(ii)

Specialised Training

So far in this chapter we have been describing the ways by which the Ministry of Labour at its Training Centres and under the Emergency and Auxiliary Training Schemes provided for inexperienced workers a basic training in a variety of engineering trades, so that they could enter employment with some practical knowledge of the type of work that they would be required to do. We have also referred to the help given on a smaller scale to the Army and Navy in training soldiers and Naval ratings to become Service tradesmen. Facilities for training made available by the Ministry were not, however, limited to these two important objectives. As the war went on and shortages of particular types of labour arose, courses of training designed to meet the needs of particular industries or services were run under the auspices of the department either at the Training Centres or at technical colleges, or in employers' establishments. These were supplemented by lectures and instruction, usually on a part-time basis, for production planners, foremen and charge-hands, and culminated late in the war with a scheme known as Training Within Industry, the object of which was to develop the skill of supervisors at any level in a firm in handling and instructing workers for whom they were responsible. The diversification of the training will become apparent from the following review of the more important courses that were set up.

In the spring of 1940 when the question was first raised whether the Government should organise training to increase the supply of shipyard workers the employers' federation had expressed the opinion, which was at that time accepted by the War Cabinet, that the training could be more satisfactorily provided in the shipyards by the industry itself than in Government Training Centres. In the following year, however, the Clyde Shipbuilders' Association proposed that, in view of the shortage of riveters on the Clyde, the Ministry should start a training scheme in a disused shipyard at Jordanvale. The Ministry, while willing to exercise a measure of supervision and to recruit and pay the trainees, was not at first anxious to undertake a type of training of

which it had no experience and which, as the instructors, equipment and premises would all have to come from the industry, it felt it would be more appropriate for the employers to run themselves. The industry was unimpressed by these arguments and, when it appeared that if it did not take the initiative nothing would be done, the Ministry drew up an acceptable plan. In controlling the scheme the Ministry was assisted by an advisory committee representative of the two sides of the industry on the Clyde under an independent chairman. The yard, at which at first there were sixty places, was treated as an annexe to the Springburn Government Training Centre, and the original plan was to train only boys between the ages of 15½ and 18 in riveting. The first course began in April 1942, and the boys were given six to eight weeks' instruction and were then placed in various shipyards as apprentices. A few weeks later it was decided to offer instruction in rivet heating, and fifteen places were made available for young men between the ages of 18 and 20; while in the autumn of 1942, when the need for more electric welders became acute, a further thirty-six places were allocated for training in welding. Men and women as well as boys were made eligible for admission to this latter course, which after the necessary extension of the premises started in March 1943. By August 1944 542 riveters and rivet heaters and 391 welders had been trained at the Clyde shipyard, but increasing difficulty in obtaining recruits, especially for the riveting courses, led to its closure in May, 1945. Classes in electric welding were also held in the Low Walker Shipyard from the spring of 1943 until August 1944, by which date the needs of the Tyneside shipyards had been met.¹ Lastly, courses in electric welding were in September 1942 added to the syllabus of a number of Government Training Centres, and from that date until the end of hostilities approximately a thousand trainees were placed in employment in shipyards.

Road transport was another industry upon which the war placed increasing requirements. Large numbers of light commercial lorries were in constant demand and, with the call-up of young men, drivers became scarce. To meet the needs of the smaller road-haulage operators the Ministry of Labour, in agreement with the Ministry of War Transport, instituted in July 1941 short courses lasting four weeks in driving and elementary running repairs. Those eligible for training were men and women over seventeen years of age—those between seventeen and twenty-one being only allowed to handle vehicles of under three tons unladen weight. There were two separate systems by which the training was given, corresponding to the two Auxiliary Training Schemes. Under the first the Ministry made

¹ See further P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter V (ii) where the unpopularity of riveting and rivet heating and the high rate of wastage among apprentice riveters placed from the Jordanvale training school is discussed.

arrangements with training schools and employers who had the necessary facilities to give the instruction at a fixed rate of £4 a head. It paid the trainees wages and allowances and, if they passed their tests satisfactorily, placed them in employment. Under the second scheme the trainees were deemed to be the employees of the training employer, who was liable for their wages and insurance contributions. On completion of the course some of them remained in the employment of the trainer, but the intention was that most should be placed elsewhere by the Ministry of Labour. For each trainee who was released for the common pool the employer-trainer was reimbursed on a fixed rate by the Ministry of Labour. Women provided most of the applicants for these courses—512 as against 72 men and boys over a period of two and a half years. Out of this total only 142 women and 32 men and boys were placed in employment. It would thus appear that a high standard was sensibly required of the candidates in their passing out test.

Another industry for which special elaborate schemes of training were put into operation by the Ministry of Labour was coal-mining. In the summer of 1943 the shortage of manpower was causing much anxiety, and there was an urgent need to attract men and boys to the mines. But before new entrants could become effective workers they would clearly require training. An agreed scheme was, accordingly, drawn up by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Fuel, which was to operate in two stages. At the first stage, preliminary instruction was to be given at special training centres set up and run by the Ministry of Labour; at the second, more technical instruction would be undertaken under the supervision of the Ministry of Fuel by the employers to whom the trainees had been allocated and at the pits where they were to work. The main purpose of the earlier course, which lasted four weeks, was to give the newcomer some idea of what it was like to work underground and to inculcate the elements of pit-sense. Special attention was paid to safety measures and to familiarising the trainees with the terms peculiar to the industry and with the tools and equipment of the miner. Physical training was also an important part of the syllabus. The training time in a forty-four-hour week was so apportioned that half of it was spent on physical training, classroom work and visits to collieries, and half on practical training on the surface and underground. Eleven centres were eventually set up, sited either at disused pits or at production pits where a training area could be segregated. Each centre, at which the number of training places ranged from 280 to 600, was under the control of a manager, and his staff included supervisors and instructors drawn from the industry and physical training instructors. By the end of June 1945 over 46,600 men and boys (including nearly 21,000 'Bevin Boys'), who during their training were paid weekly wages at the current rate for surface

workers in the industry, had completed their courses and had been placed in employment.¹

It was not only more miners that the coal-mining industry needed; it was also seriously short of tradesmen. Mechanisation had heightened the demand for maintenance men, fitters and electricians, and those already engaged on this kind of work had to be instructed in new types of machinery brought over from America under lend-lease arrangements. The Ministry of Fuel, accordingly, suggested that a central mechanisation training establishment should be set up and that Sheffield would be a convenient choice. This proposal was adopted, and it was decided that the Ministry of Labour in view of its wide experience of training should run the new centre. The most important course, which lasted six months, was designed to give miners between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five with not less than six months' experience of underground work sufficient mechanical knowledge to enable them to maintain and do running repairs to the machinery under their charge. This experiment was a success, and during 1944 and 1945 1,520 men were trained and returned to their original employers.²

In addition to full-time higher-grade training for the coal-mining industry, the Ministry of Labour organised in November 1940 at Government Training Centres and technical colleges short courses lasting eight weeks to which employers in the engineering industry, who had not the necessary facilities in their own premises, were encouraged to send workers with practical experience so that they might acquire a higher degree of skill. Under this scheme workers remained on the pay roll of their firms, but the cost of training was borne by the Ministry. In the case of smaller firms, which found it difficult to pay wages during the period of training, financial assistance was made available. To meet the fear of the employers that their workers might not return to them when they had completed their courses, an assurance was given that, if necessary, directions would be issued. In 1942 the scheme was expanded to include men and women to be trained as substitutes for skilled men in other firms who were needed for urgent work elsewhere, and in these cases wages were paid to the workers released for training on the basis of their average earnings during the previous four weeks. Altogether 17,000 men and women received higher-grade training under these arrangements.³

Passing mention must also be made of a number of part-time courses instituted by the Ministry, because of the popularity they achieved. In July 1941 a series of evening lectures for foremen and charge-hands, to which admission was free, was given at selected technical colleges;

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. 108-110.

² *Ibid*: See also W. H. B. Court: *Coal*, pp. 280-281.

³ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 107.

20,000 attended and 12,000 successfully completed the course. This was followed the next year by a somewhat similar course for women shop supervisors, and special attention was given in the syllabus to the duties and responsibilities which they would have to undertake in the engineering industry. Over 1,000 took the course and 683 passed satisfactorily. Lastly, in the summer of 1943 a course of ten evening lectures for men and women employed in the planning departments of the engineering industry aroused so much enthusiasm that it was repeated at intervals down to the end of the war and was made available to planning staff in all industries.

Before going on to describe the assistance given by the Ministry of Labour to the training of supervisory staff in industrial firms, it will be convenient to look for a moment at the domestic courses which were run primarily for women. A feature of life under war-time restrictions was the growth of communal feeding and in factories and workshops, which were often at a distance from the workers' homes or lodgings, canteens became a necessity. Their use and popularity was, however, largely dependent upon good cooking and good management. As the number of canteens increased, so did also the difficulty of finding capable women prepared to do the work and in the summer of 1941 the scarcity was becoming serious. Under pressure from its adviser on women's employment the Ministry of Labour decided, in co-operation with the Education Departments, to institute first a scheme of training for canteen cooks and, a little later, another for manageresses. The courses in cooking, which lasted about six weeks, were given either at technical institutes or in selected works' canteens, and trainees were paid an allowance of 33s. a week with a free mid-day meal and, if they lived more than two miles away, their daily travelling expenses. Over a period of four years some 3,450 women were accepted for training and 2,200 of them subsequently took up employment at canteens. This was perhaps quite a creditable result, but it was only obtained at the cost of the most strenuous efforts. A wide publicity was given to the scheme through women's organisations, the Board of Education and factory inspectors, the press and the B.B.C., but the response was on the whole disappointing. Other measures were then taken to widen the field of recruitment. The lower age limit of thirty, which had originally been imposed, was brought down to nineteen for women with previous experience of canteen work and was later waived altogether. In January 1943 it was decided that women liable to direction who were suitable for training as cooks should, when necessary, be ordered to take up training, while in October of the same year natives of Eire and suitable aliens of either sex were made eligible. Canteen cooking was clearly out of favour. The second scheme for training in canteen management was also only a moderate success. Each course consisted of two weeks' attendance at classes sandwiched by work of practical

training at a canteen, and the training given was thorough and practical. But between February 1942 and the end of 1945 only 118 women were accepted, and of these only 91 took up employment for which they had been trained.

Another problem of the Ministry of Labour in 1943 was the acute shortage of domestic workers in hospitals and other institutions. It was thought, on the recommendation of an advisory committee which had been especially appointed, that a short course of training of four weeks might attract women and girls of sixteen and upwards, but the plan was abortive. The explanation of the unpopularity of domestic work is not difficult. It was in competition with munitions work, which was better paid and which was at least thought to be less hard. Moreover, the latter was a war-time novelty, and it was not perhaps surprising that many women preferred as their war service to do what could be called a man's job rather than domestic work, which was always their particular domain. There we may leave domestic matters and return to industry.

It was recognised by Mr. Bevin as soon as he assumed office that, whatever contribution might be made by Government Training Centres, most industrial training would have to be done by the employers themselves. This in turn presented practical problems; first, the best way of convincing employers, many of whom were sceptical of the advantages and the necessity of providing training, and secondly, how to ensure, as far as might be possible, that the training which was given was well devised and helpfully imparted. Charged with these responsibilities the Ministry set up a Training Within Industry Advisory Service, and two practical proposals were quickly adopted. First, a handbook, in which principles and methods were described, was issued and made available to employers.¹ Secondly, arrangements were made for representatives of managements to visit Government Training Centres or firms with well developed training schemes to study methods on the spot, and reciprocally for members of the Ministry's technical staff to visit factories and stay for a few days so that they might advise and assist in the planning and initiation of training programmes. For a time, too, women instructors from Government Training Centres were also employed to demonstrate to firms the degree of skill which women could attain, as a means of overcoming objections to their employment on particular kinds of work.² Towards the end of the war the Ministry introduced a new form of training called 'Training Within Industry for Supervisors', or T.W.I. for short, which was adapted from a scheme which had met with considerable success in America. Its aim was to develop the skill of supervision at all levels in industry ranging

¹ P.L. 82 (Revised), first issued as P.L. 73/1940.

² *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), p. 108.

from the newly appointed charge-hand to the senior executive. Apart from a knowledge of his job and of his responsibilities there were, it was suggested, certain other skills which the good supervisor must possess. These were three in number—skill of instruction, skill of handling workers and skill of improving methods—and to the acquisition or development of these the new course was directed. The ways in which this was done were as follows. Three separate programmes—one for each skill—were drawn up, and each programme involved attendance at five two-hour sessions held on consecutive days during working hours in a firm. The sessions were conducted on group conference lines and the number of supervisors attending each group was limited to ten. The first two-hour session of each programme was devoted to the acceptance of principles, which were demonstrated by the trainer in charge of the classes. The remaining four sessions were taken up with the actual practice by each individual supervisor on one of his own jobs or problems, which was laid before the group for discussion. The trainer confined himself to the application of the principles and did not enter into a discussion on any technical point. He could thus conduct sessions in any firm, irrespective of the type of production or the nature of the problem involved. At first the trainers were provided by the Ministry, but soon a week's course for trainers was set up and large firms responded willingly to the invitation to send one of their own staff to be trained as a trainer. It was not claimed that there was anything new in the principles involved in the programme of training. The novelty was the method of approach by group discussion and the practical demonstration of problems instead of the old system by which, for example, foremanship training was given by a series of lectures. The success which T.W.I. achieved both during and after the war is the best proof that a genuine advance had been made in the art of training industrial workers.

By the end of the war a large amount of training had been carried out by employers in their own establishments, and there can be little question that this development, which was so essential to the execution of the munitions programme, owed not a little to the inspiring lead of the Minister and the practical advice and help given by his department. No doubt the quality of the training varied. What was important was the acceptance of the principle of training. The seed that was sown under duress of war was to yield good fruit especially among young workers when peace-time conditions returned to industry.

(iii)

Summary

We may conclude this survey of training during the war with an assessment of the value of the contribution it made to the munitions industries. Table 32 provides the relevant statistics.

Leaving out of account the 17,000 who received higher-grade engineering training, it will be seen that during the war a little less than 350,000 men and women were admitted to Government Training Centres and technical colleges for basic engineering courses, and of this total upwards of 270,000 successfully completed their training and were placed in appropriate employment. The difference of some 80,000 between the two figures was largely accounted for by premature termination of training. This was undoubtedly a high rate of wastage, but when the matter was investigated it was found that ill health was the predominant cause. When it is remembered that most of the men were either over military age or had been placed in low medical categories, and that many women had had no previous experience of industrial life, it becomes less surprising that a considerable number could not face up to the hard work which the intensive courses involved. The question, however, to which some answer must be given is whether, bearing in mind the necessarily high cost of maintaining and running the Government Training Centres, to have provided industry with some 270,000 workers with a basic knowledge of some branches of engineering was a worth while contribution.

On this matter there is room for a difference of opinion. There will be some who will no doubt maintain that it was a waste of public money and that, if employers had been left to give the necessary training, the results would have been equally satisfactory and production would not have suffered. Against this view there are, on the other hand, considerations which, to the present writer at any rate, point strongly in the opposite direction. Three in particular may be mentioned. First, at the time when the Government Training Centre courses were set up, apart from the Royal Ordnance Factories and a number of more far-sighted large firms, very little training was being given in employers' establishments as a means of circumventing the shortage of fully skilled men. Anything, therefore, that could be done to provide industry with even a small number of adaptable workers capable of doing a job which called for some measure of practical skill was surely one of the most valuable services that the Government could render. Secondly, within the engineering industry there were big, middle-sized and small undertakings. Whereas the large and to

some extent the middle-sized firms might from their own resources provide suitable training for their workers, the small employer could not. If nothing had been done by the Government to help the latter, his production, which was essential to the war effort, would have been seriously impeded through lack of properly trained workers. To suggest that the larger firms in the absence of action by the Government would have come to his rescue and trained his workers for him is illusory. Employers for what no doubt seemed to them good reasons were not inclined to be altruistic. Thirdly, the fact that training courses were actually running at Government Training Centres or technical colleges was a stimulus to employers to get on with their own schemes; and, more than that, the experience gained in methods of training at the Centres, which was freely put at the disposal of employers, undoubtedly assisted them in the preparation and running of their own schemes. It may well be true that mistakes were made at the Centres; that the need for their expansion was over-estimated and that for a time at any rate the type of training given was too ambitious and took too long. But these were errors on the right side and do not seriously weaken the argument that the training provided by the Ministry of Labour played an important part in overcoming the shortage of skilled labour.

While fighting was still going on the Government Training Centres began courses of training designed to assist the disabled to fit themselves for a job in civilian life.¹ This important work, together with the facilities offered to the able-bodied to resettle themselves after their war service was over, has been described in an earlier chapter.

¹ During the war some 13,000 were admitted to Government Training Centres, of whom 10,000 were subsequently placed in employment. In addition, over 1,700 were admitted to technical colleges or other establishments and 1,000 of these entered employment.

SUMMARY

Table 32: Numbers of fit men and women who received full-time training between September 1939 and June 1945.

	Admitted			Placed in employment or returned to employment or Service duty			Completed course but unplaced			Prematurely terminated		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<i>Government Training Centres</i>												
Basic training	151,366	102,941	254,307	112,332	83,440	195,772	5,161	2,072	7,233	38,256	17,429	55,685
Higher Grade training	8,492	6,776	15,268	8,492	6,776	15,268	—	—	—	—	—	—
Service training	55,401	1,172	56,573	55,401	1,172	56,573	—	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Technical Colleges (excluding Coal-mining Schemes)</i>												
Basic training	27,178	67,506	94,684	19,447	56,257	75,704	3,564	2,508	6,072	4,167	8,741	12,908
Higher Grade training	972	785	1,757	972	785	1,757	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946 (Cmd. 7225), Appendix VII.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WELFARE OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKER

THE PRESENT CENTURY has seen a steady advance in the measures taken to protect the industrial worker from accidents and to improve the conditions in which he is required to work. The realisation that efficient production is linked with the contentedness of the worker has borne fruit in better lighted and more commodious premises, in technical devices for increasing the safety and comfort of the worker, and in the provision of canteens and other amenities for off-work hours. This growing care for the well-being of the worker inside the factory was partly imposed by legislation and was partly the outcome of more humanitarian principles. It also owed something to the lessons learned from the extensive re-deployment of labour during the two World Wars. But in time of war special difficulties arise and welfare arrangements have to be devised or adapted to meet the exceptional circumstances.

This was particularly true in the Second World War. With the huge demand for the rapid output of war materials longer working hours were inevitable, workers had to be moved from their customary occupations, and large numbers of women had to be drawn into employment and sent, often to remote areas, to do unfamiliar jobs. These radical changes in the composition of the labour force of the war industries and the places and conditions in which men and women were required to work raised acutely the problem of how best to provide for their well-being and comfort. It was not primarily a question of making improvements in peace-time standards; in the tempo of war-time production some greater austerities in working conditions were inescapable. It was rather a matter of devising measures which would ensure that the necessary increase and maintenance of production was achieved with the least possible hardship to the worker, and which would help to temper the privations of people living and working in a country at war. The responsibilities that thus devolved upon the Government were to aim at keeping working hours within the maximum compatible with health and efficiency, to stimulate arrangements for medical care, housing and good feeding, and—for the transferred workers in particular—to sponsor opportunities for recreation and recuperation that would ease the strain of sustained effort. Thus the range of welfare arrangements in war was inevitably

wider than in peace. They could not be confined to the hours at which men and women were actually at work; they must also provide for their living conditions outside the factories. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe the schemes that were developed and the success they attained.

The administration of the legislation dealing with factories was in September 1939, as it had been since its inception, the responsibility of the Home Office, and no change had been made during the 1914/1918 war. At the outbreak of the Second World War the Home Secretary was further empowered to avail himself of the more expeditious machinery of the Defence Regulations to make special Orders for securing the safety, health and welfare of workers covered by the Factories Acts, who were engaged on essential work where life or limb might be in danger or injury to health threatened.¹ This continued to be the position during the first six months of the war, but in this period no use had been made by the Home Secretary of his emergency powers. Moreover, the welfare of workers outside the times of employment was not as yet the concern of a particular government department. In March 1940 the Home Policy Committee considered whether any special action was necessary to ensure the well-being of workers both within and without factory hours. In the First World War nothing had been done till in September 1915 a Health of Munitions Workers Committee had been set up and, as a result of its enquiries, the Ministry of Munitions had been vested with special responsibility for securing welfare measures for workers in national and 'controlled' establishments. With the continued advice of the Committee and the co-operation of factory inspectors some effective action was taken, but there was an inevitable overlap between the functions of the Ministry of Munitions and the Home Office. To avoid a repetition of this unsatisfactory division of authority it was argued that, while the supply departments should concern themselves with the welfare of their own industrial employees, it would be better if in privately run establishments responsibility should rest with the Factory Department, which would, of course, work in co-operation with the Ministry of Supply. For the central administration of arrangements for welfare outside the factory no immediate plans were in being; but at a subsequent inter-departmental conference the need for government action was recognised, and the Ministries of Labour and Health were asked to consider the best means of tackling the problem. Before the fall of the Chamberlain Government no decision had yet been taken with which government department responsibility should lie, but there were pointers that the Ministry of Labour would be the ultimate choice.

Shortly after he had assumed office the new Minister of Labour had made up his mind. He proposed that all necessary measures for

¹ Under Defence Regulation 60: S. R. & O. 1939, No. 1681.

promoting the welfare of workers both inside and outside the factories should be his responsibility, and that to this end the administration of the Factories Acts should be transferred from the Home Office to his own department. The idea was not so revolutionary as at first sight it might appear. Similar proposals had been made in the past, but had been either shelved or turned down. Had it not been for the personality of the new Minister with his deep interest in the lives of the workers the new proposal might well have shared the fate of its predecessors, and the Home Office would not have been shorn of such an important part of its functions. As it was, the Home Secretary agreed to the transfer of responsibility on the understanding that it was purely a war measure without prejudice to what should happen when peace was restored. On 7th June 1940 the necessary legislation was passed.¹

Apart from the stimulating influence of Mr. Bevin's personal interest in welfare there were other considerable benefits in the reorganisation. First, all welfare arrangements became the responsibility of a single Ministry, and the uncertainties that were bound to arise from dual control, with the factory wall as the line of demarcation, were avoided. Secondly, welfare arrangements rightly regarded were an integral part of manpower planning, because to a considerable extent they conditioned the distribution and maintenance of the labour force of the war industries. The Ministry of Labour was, therefore, their appropriate home and the housing of the factory inspectorate under the same roof as the labour supply administration facilitated mutual advice and consultation. Moreover, the Ministry of Labour, as the purveyor and controller of labour, had obligations to employers and workers alike and in this double capacity might be expected to preserve a fair balance between production requirements and human needs. For the discharge of its new duties a Factory and Welfare Department was established within the Ministry and, in order that full use might be made of the knowledge and experience gained in the administration of the Factories Acts, one or two senior officers who were most conversant with the work were transferred from the Home Office. About the same time a Factory and Welfare Advisory Board, whose members included representatives of employers, trade unions and voluntary bodies, was set up under the Minister's chairmanship to give advice and assistance in the development of welfare plans for workers both inside and outside the factories.

But in these two spheres the status of welfare was different. Whereas arrangements for workers inside the factory had been built up round the requirements of the Factories Acts and for their execution there was a running machine of tried efficiency, the provision of amenities outside the factory had no legal basis and the Government had rarely

¹ S. R. & O. 1940, No. 907 superseded by S. R. & O. 1941, No. 2057, 18th December 1941.

entered this field. Between the wars, it is true, the Ministry of Labour had sponsored welfare work for the unemployed, but its organisation had been left to voluntary societies under the guidance of the National Council of Social Service. The simplest and quickest way, therefore, of developing external welfare was to enlist the assistance of voluntary organisations which were to some extent already catering for these needs, and to stimulate the extension of their work. But it was further necessary to secure co-operation centrally and to co-ordinate their varying activities. The Minister, accordingly, invited the voluntary organisations to set up a central council and, in addition, smaller units to deal with the different aspects of welfare. Three groups were formed and together they made up the Central Consultative Council of Voluntary Organisations under the chairmanship of Lady Cynthia Colville. On the official side welfare officers were appointed, of whom one was stationed at each divisional office and the remainder—who by 1945 had reached a total of 120—at local centres to work in close co-operation with employers, factory welfare officers, local authorities and voluntary organisations.¹ This difference in the approach made by the Minister to the development of welfare arrangements outside as compared with inside the factory was in accordance with his own intuition of what would be the response of the workers. In a later speech in the House of Commons he explained the principle on which his plans were based: 'I emphasised to employers and trade unions the need to remember that the worker inside the factory is a different person from the worker outside the factory: that we must not have a kind of industrial feudalism growing up in war, under which firms would take the responsibility of looking after their people even when they had left the factories. A person will accept discipline inside the factory, but immediately he is outside the door he becomes a free citizen. Therefore it is necessary to have a different organisation to deal with him after he leaves the factory gate'.²

In the following paragraphs we shall follow this broad distinction. We shall first give an account of schemes for welfare outside working hours. This will begin with the arrangements made for the transfer, reception and housing of workers and, after a brief survey of the ways in which transport difficulties were handled, it will describe the recreational facilities which were provided. We shall then turn to welfare inside the factory with special attention to the new arrangements made for the health and good feeding of the workers. The chapter will conclude with a short account of two particular welfare schemes, one for the dockers and the other for merchant seamen, which were the fruit of the Minister's stimulating influence.

¹ See above p. 121.

(The regional welfare officers made monthly reports to the Factory and Welfare Advisory Board).

² H. of C. Deb., Vol. 382, Col. 50-52 and 55, 22nd July 1942.

(i)

Outside the Factory

(a) TRANSFER AND RECEPTION

The provision made for welfare outside the factory was largely the outcome of the transfer of workers to employment in areas that were often far distant from their homes. At the time when the new welfare department was set up in the Ministry of Labour a considerable movement was already taking place either voluntarily or under the persuasion of the local offices, but as yet little was being done to help the transferred workers to obtain suitable accommodation near their work. A fortunate few had billets found for them by their future employers, but the majority had to fend for themselves with such assistance as local offices of the Ministry of Labour could give them by providing addresses of possible lodgings. If, as was often the case, they reached their destination late in the day they might be stranded for the night, and this discouragement was sufficient to drive many of them to give up the unequal contest. It was estimated that in the Midlands between a quarter and a third of the immigrants sooner or later went home because in the absence of reception arrangements they had been unable to get lodgings, or those they had found were either too expensive or too uncomfortable. In September 1940 the Ministry of Labour took the first effective steps to introduce some organisation into this chaotic situation. Local offices were instructed to see that workers who were about to transfer to another part of the country were given full information about the places to which they were going. Particulars of the numbers travelling and the times of their arrival were to be sent to the local offices in the reception areas, and workers were to be told to go to the local office in their new employment area if they were in any difficulty. At the same time the Minister insisted that in the Midlands, where the problem was most acute, the billeting machinery of the local authorities should continue to function at the week-end, and the Minister of Health further agreed that, wherever the influx of workers justified it, full-time billeting officers would be appointed to deal exclusively with the needs of industrial workers.

The organisation of reception schemes, which was one of the main responsibilities of the Ministry's newly appointed welfare officers, naturally took some time to get going. Nevertheless, by the autumn of 1940 with the help of local reception committees satisfactory arrangements were in operation in London and in some of the North Western industrial towns, while later in the year voluntary organisations rendered valuable and appreciated services to dockers who were transferred from Southern England to Scottish ports. Following the disclosure of the high rate of wastage among transferred workers in the

Midlands, reception offices were set up at the two principal railway stations in Birmingham, and by March 1941, manned with Ministry of Labour staff they were open from eight o'clock in the morning until midnight. This set the precedent for other parts of the country and at times during the war some of the reception offices at important rail centres were in action for twenty-four hours a day. As experience in reception arrangements grew it became apparent that when large batches of workers were arriving together it would be a great advantage to all concerned if the necessary formalities could all be completed at one centre. The local offices of the Ministry of Labour were selected for this purpose, and the national registration, food and billeting officers together with representatives of employing firms were in attendance to receive the newcomers. There remained, however, the danger that more workers might arrive at the same time than the machinery could efficiently handle and, with a view to evening out the rate at which new workers came into an area, it was later decided to allocate to supply departments specific forwarding days.

As time went on schemes for escorting women on their journeys were introduced, and by May 1941 the North Midlands, Northern and Scottish Regions were conveying workers transferring to the Midlands. Voluntary organisations became increasingly helpful, particularly when in the summer of 1941 directions began to be issued to nineteen-year-old girls to go to employment away from their home districts. For example, at Gainsborough the W.V.S. met all women on their arrival, took them to tea at a club and then accompanied them to the local office of the Ministry of Labour, while during 1943 the same organisation gave much assistance to workers who had on their journeys to pass through London. But the most effective measure that was taken was the setting up of reception hostels, at which workers were enabled to spend a night or two while suitable lodgings were being found for them. By November 1941 twenty-five hostels were open and twenty-seven more were being planned. Three months later, with another seven opened and twenty-three others in preparation, the Factory and Welfare Advisory Board decided that sufficient facilities were available, provided that some accommodation was earmarked for reception purposes in residential hostels, of which more will be said later in this chapter.

(b) LODGINGS

The difficulty of finding lodgings for workers was complicated by the evacuation which followed the aerial attacks on London in the later months of 1940. Landladies' sympathies tended to lie with the evacuees, particularly as some of them were prepared to pay high rents. When provincial towns came under enemy fire, pressure on accommodation became acute both in evacuation areas and in some

industrial towns like Coventry where many workers' homes had been destroyed. By this time plans for building residential hostels for workers were in hand, but the necessity for a rigid economy in new buildings made it imperative to use private houses to the fullest possible extent. In November 1940 the Minister of Health was given power to regulate or prohibit in particular areas the letting of lodgings,¹ so as to prevent accommodation that was badly needed for workers being taken up in undue proportions by evacuees, and gradually this machinery was used with some effect in about forty districts.² Earlier in the year the same Minister had been given the more far-reaching authority to compel householders to provide billets and he had exercised his powers on behalf of industrial workers on two occasions—in July to provide accommodation for workers building a Royal Ordnance Factory at Wrexham, and in October for women going to work at the Royal Ordnance Factory at Hereford. Thereafter it was his policy to delegate this responsibility to local authorities. The exercise of these compulsory powers was, however, never popular and, while most authorities were prepared to apply them sparingly, a few declined to implement them at all.

The reaction of householders varied considerably. Some, with the knowledge that compulsion could be applied, offered board in addition to lodging while they were still able to select their lodgers. Others waited for the compulsory notice to be served and then not infrequently agreed to provide food as well. But there were others who were less obliging. Far from offering to provide board, they restricted their lodging facilities to the bare minimum imposed by the billeting order for the weekly five-shilling fee—namely, to shelter, access to drinking water and sanitary arrangements. The unpleasantness of being billeted in such an uncongenial atmosphere was aggravated when the workers had to walk some distance to get breakfast before going on to their place of employment. From time to time the question was raised whether compulsory powers should be extended to the provision of meals in addition to sleeping accommodation, but the Ministry of Health, influenced no doubt by its experience of issuing such notices for civil servants and military personnel, refused to contemplate even an experimental application of such wider obligations. It was thus left to the persuasive tongues of the billeting officers, helped by a pamphlet issued by the Ministry of Labour exhorting householders to 'Welcome the War Worker',³ to try and find both board and lodging for transferred workers. At the beginning of 1942 the situation was somewhat eased by a decision made by the Ministry of Labour that married women living in areas of acute labour shortage would not be directed

¹ Under Defence Regulation 68C.

² See R. M. Titmuss: *Problems of Social Policy*, p. 366, 3n.

³ P.L. 85/1941.

to other work, if they were ready to provide accommodation and meals for workers coming into the district. By this time, too, it would appear that landladies were more disposed to take in workers than evacuees. Nevertheless, in the early months of 1942 with rationing and shortages of food, householders were becoming less inclined to undertake to feed their lodgers. The only effective remedy was to hasten on with the provision of facilities for communal feeding, which for a variety of reasons were in some parts of the country slow in developing.

A particular difficulty arose over the transfer of married men, who had been encouraged to hope that they would be able later on to have their families living with them. In February 1941, as a gesture of goodwill, the Government decided to build a token amount of married quarters and special priority was given to their construction. Before the end of the year plans had been made for accommodation to house 10,000 M.A.P., 8,000 Ministry of Supply and 1,000 Admiralty employees and their families, but in November, in consequence of the Prime Minister's directive to cut down the labour force of the building industry, the programme had to be revised. While the Ministry of Supply was prepared to reduce its demands, the Ministry of Aircraft Production characteristically raised its fourfold. In this situation it was decided to make a survey of accommodation in sixty areas, which were already congested and in which pressure for more houses was likely to become acute. As a result of this investigation it became clear that it was no good keeping up the pretence to married workers that there were prospects of being able to provide them with houses for their families. No further building could be entertained, and to turn single workers out of their billets and earmark them for married men and their families would merely aggravate existing difficulties. This lack of accommodation for married workers with the break-up of family life that it entailed persisted till the end of hostilities and was one of the worst social legacies of the war. But it was not an isolated feature. No less distressing was the poor quality of some of the billets with which workers were obliged to be content. Reporting in 1944 on railway coach accommodation for railway workers at Bletchley, a welfare officer reflected: 'although railway carriages are far from ideal for permanent housing, no doubt the men are better housed in these carriages than they would be in many compulsory billets.'

(c) RESIDENTIAL HOSTELS

The projected dispersal of factories and the building of Royal Ordnance Factories in isolated areas brought home to the Government the need for providing residential hostels on a substantial scale. The case was further strengthened by the anticipated adoption by industry of the three-shift system, which might well make it more difficult for the workers affected to find private lodgings. Down to the end of 1940

building was restricted to the requirements of the Ministry of Supply for R.O.F. workers, of the Admiralty and Ministry of Aircraft Production and of the Air Ministry establishments, but revised instructions by the War Cabinet then made it possible to plan for other sections of industry. The supply departments managed and ran their own hostels; on the question of who should be responsible for hostels catering for workers in privately owned establishments there was a difference of official opinion. The Ministry of Supply argued that the Ministry of Labour, as the department responsible for the supply and welfare of the workers, should also manage their hostels and, while consenting to take over the management of the first hostel opened in January 1941 which was for workers in the drop-forging industry, made it clear that this must not be regarded as a precedent. The Ministry of Labour on its side was no less anxious not to be saddled with additional administrative burdens. It seemed to the Ministry that its function was to stimulate the provision of hostels; the running of them was for either the supply department concerned or the employer. These official representations did not, however, find favour with Mr. Bevin. He saw many objections to leaving private employers to run the new hostels. In the absence of Government control of standards and charges there was a strong likelihood that the hostels would be badly run and that an undesirable competitive element might creep in, with some employers making generous subsidies to provide elaborate amenities for small charges, to the detriment of others who were not prepared to adopt these methods. The Minister had his own solution. He proposed that the responsibility for running hostels for private employers should be vested in a Hostels Board to be set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour. This proposal was accepted by all the interested Government departments in April 1941 and a memorandum setting out the contemplated arrangements, which included an initial grant from the Treasury and the fixing of standard charges, was approved by the Home Policy Committee.

The new organisation, which was known as the National Service Hostels Corporation Limited, came into being in May 1941. Five directors—one of them a woman—constituted the Board of Management¹ with co-opted members from the Ministries of Labour, Supply and Aircraft Production, and a Hostels Advisory Committee was also set up under the chairmanship of one of the Parliamentary Secretaries of the Ministry of Labour. The Corporation ran most of its hostels by direct management, but a few were placed on an agency basis or were allowed to remain independent. The Ministry of Fuel made its own arrangements with the Corporation for running hostels for young

¹ They were Lord Rushcliffe (chairman), Major R. F. Laughton (managing director), Miss Margaret Bondfield, Mr (later Sir) Harry Methven and a financial director who was transferred from the Ministry of Labour. Miss Bondfield was succeeded in September 1942 by Mrs. Esther Martin of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers.

miners, while all hostels planned exclusively for agricultural workers, because they were small and isolated, remained the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. Some months elapsed before any of the hostels managed by the Corporation were ready for occupation, but two were opened in December 1941. At the middle of 1942 sixteen were in use, half of them for M.A.P. and half for Ministry of Supply workers, and by the end of the year ten more, one of them for Ministry of Labour trainees at the Government Training Centre at Letchworth, had been added.

The standards of accommodation to be adopted for the hostels were considered early in 1941 and in April a lay-out, which with the need for strict economy in building materials and labour seemed to provide a reasonable amount of comfort, was generally agreed. The plans comprised sleeping blocks of forty-eight single-bunked cubicles with an ablution block for each. What was termed the welfare accommodation was contained in one large block and consisted of a lounge, reading rooms, an assembly hall accommodating about half the total number of residents, a dining room planned to seat the same proportion, a shop, post office and hair-dressing facilities. A sick bay completed the welfare provisions. Some hostels, which were already erected or were in process of building, were designed on rather more spacious lines, but the newly agreed standards were to apply to all subsequent hostels. In practice even the more generous provision of welfare facilities proved quite inadequate. The assumption that most of the residents would be working on a three-shift system had been unduly optimistic. As it was, even when a two or three-shift system was in operation, a large majority of the residents worked the day shift and consequently wanted to use the common room in the evening. The inadequacy of the accommodation provided was only too apparent at Coventry, which after the air raids had lost most of its recreation facilities, and to avoid gross overcrowding it was decided that, until they could be enlarged, the older hostels should be only used to sixty per cent. of their capacity. Meanwhile the Ministry of Works in the interests of economy had been attempting to impose lower standards than had been agreed in April 1941, and to the Ministry of Labour these proposals suggested a prison rather than a hostel for workers. Eventually in February 1942 a compromise was reached, and the economies advocated by the Ministry of Works were met, not by the sacrifice of amenities but by a more compact lay-out and structural alterations. In the new design provision was made for common-room capacity which was sufficient for the whole of the resident population.

The charges for board and lodging were first fixed at 30s. a week for men and 25s. for women. These covered two full meals and a light meal or snack on each working day and three meals on Sunday. Comparable prices in private lodgings ranged from 25s. to 35s. a week.

Towards the end of 1941, however, the Ministry of Supply became alarmed at the small numbers using its R.O.F. hostels, and in an attempt to popularize them reduced its charges to 27s. 6d. a week for men and 22s. 6d. for women.¹ Faced with this *fait accompli* the Corporation had little option but to propose a similar scaling down of its own rates and, contrary to what was feared, the Minister of Labour gave the suggestion his whole-hearted approval, and was indeed prepared for even further reductions. Low lodging rates, he argued, would remove one of the main grounds on which claims for higher wages were commonly based and might also help to bring down the higher prices which some landladies were trying to extort. One further alteration in charges was made early in 1943. It was discovered that a considerable number of workers were making their mid-day meal off the snacks provided by the hostel instead of going to the industrial canteens, and when they returned at the end of the day the evening meal was not enough to satisfy their wants. It was, accordingly, decided to abolish the provision of snacks and by way of compensation to reduce the weekly charges to 25s. for men and 20s. for women.

Filling up the hostels was by no means always a rapid or steady process. Sometimes when a hostel was ready for occupation the demand bore little resemblance to the estimated requirements upon which the accommodation had been planned. Various measures were used to fill the vacant places. For example, agricultural workers were in some cases admitted to the hostels intended exclusively for industrial workers. In other cases people rendered homeless by air raids or evacuees from Southern England during the flying bomb phase were admitted. But this heterogeneous use of hostels did not always succeed in filling them to an extent that justified the cost of their upkeep. From the middle of 1944 a constant review was made of those which over a period of three months had been filled to less than two-thirds of their capacity, but, while it was possible in some districts for residents of two or more hostels to be collected into one, there were others in isolated areas where no alternative accommodation existed. A number of hostels had, therefore, to be run uneconomically. Nevertheless, on balance the hostel service as a whole justified the running losses incurred. In a total of 155 hostels and construction camps run by the Corporation accommodation was provided for 36,000 general industrial workers, over 17,500 miners and over 18,500 building and repair workers—a total capacity of nearly 73,000 beds. Although the hostels were never occupied to their full complement, at peak periods 32,000 were housed in the general industrial hostels, while the remainder were filled to within one-sixth of their capacity.

¹ See further P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter VIII (v).

(d) TRANSPORT FOR WORKERS

The difficulty experienced by workers in travelling to and from their places of employment with reasonable expedition and comfort was a justifiable grievance, which was most persistent in the two winters that followed the evacuation from Dunkirk. As early as the end of 1940 the Chief Industrial Commissioner had reported to the Factory and Welfare Board that an ugly mood was developing among workers generally because of inadequate transport facilities, and factory inspectors attributed to the same cause the high turnover of labour. Workers, they represented, were prepared to work the extra hours required of them if they could get home without undue delay, but they could not stand long waits for transport and slow uncomfortable journeys on the top of a long day's work in the factory. Unless better provision was made, sickness and absenteeism were bound to increase. The welfare officers of the Ministry of Labour were tireless in their efforts to stimulate action, and the Minister himself after a personal visit to Bristol conferred with the Minister of War Transport on ways in which improvements could be made. The problem was neither simple nor uniform; between district and district there were vast differences in local conditions and proposals that might be effective for one were inoperable in another; but in general the solution lay primarily in a reorganisation of local transport services. To describe in any detail the steps that were taken is beyond the scope of this volume. We shall, therefore, do no more than sketch the outline, and then give closer attention to two aspects of the problem which particularly concerned the Ministry of Labour—the supply of drivers and conductresses for buses, and the payment of travelling allowances to workers.

The inflated demand for road transport coincided with the withdrawal of drivers and conductors for the Forces and the requisition of vehicles for military and other emergency purposes. About the same time factories and businesses were, to escape bombing, moving out of the centre to the safer periphery of towns. This often involved longer travelling for workers and, as in London in particular they often lived in suburbs at the opposite side of the city to where their factory was sited, they had to pass through the centre on their way to and from their work. Moreover, as the radius for recruitment to war industries widened and the policy of the dispersal of industry developed, the number of workers making long journeys increased and in remote districts there was often no means of transport between home or hostel and factory. The problem was not thus confined simply to the provision and maintenance of vehicles in sufficient numbers; it involved also the re-routing and re-timing of transport services. And there were other difficulties to be faced. Workers were objecting to high fares particularly on the railways and were refusing to travel by train, if they

could go by bus at cheaper cost. In some districts, notably in South Wales, transport depended upon a large number of small operators, some of them one-man concerns, all working independently, mostly inefficient with no spare vehicles and no reserve of drivers. For some of the Royal Ordnance Factories, too, there was the question of providing additional platforms or even new railway stations, and bus services on the extensive factory sites. Lastly, there were the complications caused by air raids with the congestion of traffic, the provision of détours and the unwillingness of operators to run their buses before the system of warning by a 'danger imminent' signal was in practice.

Many of these difficulties were not insuperable, but they called for authoritative handling. Unfortunately the statutory powers of Regional Transport Commissioners were limited. They could licence vehicles and allocate petrol, but they had no other control over transport operators. In the summer of 1941, following a report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure,¹ action to remedy the worst complaints was initiated by the Ministry of War Transport with the following results. To provide more accommodation on existing services single-deck buses, which were designed for thirty-two sitting passengers, were converted so as to carry thirty sitting and thirty standing. Railway fares were revised and, where the distances were approximately equal, were lowered so as to correspond with charges on the buses. Employers and workers were invited to co-operate in staggering hours of work so as to reduce traffic at the peak hours. The problem in South Wales was largely settled by the voluntary agreement of the small operators to pool their resources and run the services required by the Regional Transport Commissioner, by the supply of 300 new buses and a temporary loan of Army vehicles and drivers, while with the introduction of lower fares many workers were diverted from the roads to the railways. In other parts of the country re-grouping and re-timing of services were effected mainly by voluntary co-operation with the help of Regional Transport Consultative Committees, which largely on the suggestion of the Minister of Labour had been set up early in 1941 to assist the Transport Commissioners. These administrative measures were at the least a palliative but, where the only solution was more vehicles and more crews and maintenance staff, difficulties continued and were never completely solved.

The manpower situation was complex. As drivers were called up to the Services, as many conductors as possible were trained to replace them and women began to take the place of men conductors. But, whereas drivers were reserved at twenty-five, conductors were not covered by the Schedule of Reserved Occupations and they could consequently be called up while they were training to become drivers. In

¹ *Twenty-first Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, Session 1940-1941, 6th August 1941.*

December 1940, however, arrangements were made for the deferment of their call-up, and this measure together with the temporary loan of drivers from the Services helped to overcome the shortage. The real problem, which persisted till the end of the war, was the shortage of conductresses. Every device was used by the Ministry of Labour to supply more women, including in 1943 the grant of overriding preference for notified vacancies, but absenteeism and wastage continued at a high rate. The explanation is not far to seek. The hours of work were irregular and unpopular, and might run from as early as 4.30 in the morning until midnight. Although women in the early and late shifts had spells off duty during the day and were not kept continuously on the same timetable, some of them were required to report each morning in case, as often happened, the scheduled crews failed to turn up. The additional strain thus imposed led to increased absenteeism, and a still more depleted staff had to take a greater share of the more unpopular duties with even fewer rest days. Many of the conductresses, too, were young married women and, when they applied for permission to leave their jobs which were scheduled under the Essential Work Order, it was difficult to refuse their request. Various attempts were made by the Ministry to try and get the Joint Industrial Council to make the conditions of service less arduous and to pay better wages but, apart from an undertaking that trainees should be paid not less than the pre-war starting wage for similar age and grade—which meant the doubling of the rates hitherto paid—no important contributions were made by the industry towards solving the difficulties of labour supply. The Minister firmly believed that with better personnel management and the provision of more amenities for the workers the situation could be much improved. However that may be, it may be doubted whether with the bus services that had to be run and with the competing claims of other no less important, but less arduous, war work there was much that could be done to obtain and keep more conductresses. All the more credit must, therefore, be given to those who stuck to a job which, as the men acknowledged, was harder than what they were doing or would have tolerated before the war.

The other aspect of the transport problem that concerned the Ministry of Labour was the question of the payment of travelling allowance to workers. In the autumn of 1940 a scheme was authorised for Ministry of Supply establishments under which travelling expenses in excess of three shillings weekly could be paid to workers recruited for factories in isolated areas, or in non-industrial areas where the supply of local labour was exhausted and workers had to be drawn from a distance. All industrial workers were covered together with non-industrial staff earning up to £250 a year, and a condition for the application of the scheme was that no living accommodation was available near the factory. Following the introduction of this measure the Minister of

Labour, who had earlier tried unsuccessfully to impose upon employers a general scheme of daily travelling allowances, advocated a universal allowance for war workers 'to give', as he put it, 'the long distance rider a chance to travel at a much lower rate'. He was, however, deterred from pressing this proposal on the grounds that to impose such conditions would be an encroachment into what was essentially a matter for industrial negotiations between the employers and the workers concerned. Three months later a much modified proposal, which largely repeated the conditions in the Ministry of Supply's scheme but included non-industrial staff earning up to £420 per annum, was finally agreed. It was to cover the engineering and allied industries—although subsequently some other sections of industry were included—and was to apply only to new establishments or older ones greatly expanded as the result of the war which were situated in remote areas where there was a shortage of local labour and accommodation, and to establishments moved under the dispersal of industry policy to sites, to reach which their workers had to make considerably longer journeys than before. This scheme, which was permissive, was a far cry from the Minister's original ideas but, while not content with the agreement reached, he was apparently persuaded that, because the matter was bound up with general industrial questions, it would not be wise for the Government to interfere too much. On this occasion at any rate second thoughts were best.

(e) RECREATION

Although the actual organisation of recreational facilities was left to voluntary societies under the supervision of the Recreation Group of the Central Consultative Council, it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour's welfare officers to see that in their areas they were adequate and of the right kind. This was perhaps the most agreeable part of their duties and was described by one officer 'as the one piece of work we are doing which can truly be called welfare in the full sense of the word—most of the other work seems just to be cramming more people into fewer houses and on to fewer buses than ever before'. Of the various opportunities for recreation that were developed clubs or recreation centres held pride of place. While the Board of Education made itself responsible for additional requirements for young people under twenty, the Ministry of Labour took a special interest in the needs of adult workers. Requests from individual voluntary societies for financial assistance to extend their activities were considered on their merits and, where there had been a large influx of transferred workers, grants were not infrequently made to cover part of the additional expenditure that had been incurred. Many of the larger employers, too, either provided indoor or outdoor facilities for their

own employees, or contributed to funds of the local welfare committees. Pre-war clubs, of course, differed a good deal in character and purpose. While some were social or athletic, others aimed at developing character and fostering education. It was not easy to persuade the latter to alter their orthodox conceptions and to accept that what the tired industrial worker wanted was not to have his mind improved, but to be able to relax and be quiet in comfortable and companionable conditions. Accordingly, rest rooms, baths and facilities for washing hair and light laundry work were included by the Ministry in the amenities which it thought should be provided.

One of the greatest difficulties in planning the extension of clubs was the lack of suitable premises, and the situation was aggravated by the fact that many existing club rooms had been requisitioned for the use of other Government departments. Efforts were made to pool the available resources, but in many districts the accommodation was insufficient for the extended facilities that were proposed. New building was the obvious solution, but severe restrictions on labour and materials prevented much progress being made on these lines until the middle of 1943. There was also the problem of club leadership. Leaders, who had been trained for the peace-time objects of a club, were often not successful in handling war workers with whose outlook and mentality they were either unfamiliar or out of sympathy. The Recreation Group advocated choosing leaders from among the members themselves and in a number of clubs this suggestion was adopted and worked satisfactorily. But a shortage of premises and suitable leaders were not the only factors that impeded progress. It was often difficult to find local societies that had not already as much on hand as they could manage, and those which had embarked upon work for the uniformed services or evacuees were sometimes reluctant to transfer their allegiance. In the race for local interest the workers came in a poor third.

In some areas, particularly in the larger towns, existing organisations were for a time able to absorb the additional numbers, even if the recreational facilities they offered were not ideal. On the other hand, there were parts of the country where the arrangements were quite inadequate and practically nothing had materialised. It was, accordingly, decided in April 1941 to approach the National Council of Social Services and ask for its assistance in speeding up the Ministry's recreation scheme. The Council was not prepared to undertake the direct organisation of clubs, but agreed to help in securing the co-operation of local bodies. A drive to provide more recreational facilities was launched in all areas where there was compulsory billeting, and national organisations, such as the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A. and the National Association of Girls' Clubs, which were already active, were asked if they could send additional staff to help their local personnel to get more clubs going. To this latter appeal the most effective response

came from the National Association of Girls' Clubs, and under its guidance a remarkable extension of club life gradually developed. As its name implies, the Association had originally concentrated on organising activities for girls. In the middle of 1941, however, with the aid of a small grant from the Pilgrim Trust it set about systematically providing clubs for women munitions workers in the Midlands. In September it asked the Ministry of Labour for a block grant to enable it to appoint two more organisers and to extend its activities to the North West, South West and Wales. The clubs in the Midlands were proving a great success and provided just what the Ministry considered was most wanted by the transferred worker living in lodgings. It was, therefore, decided in January 1942 to accede to the Association's request so far as to make a grant which would enable it to appoint an organiser in the North West—the two other districts not appearing at the time to justify financial assistance. At the beginning of the following year the Minister discussed with the Association its future plans and as a result the first of a series of grants to the central organisation was made. By the end of the war fifty-six clubs had been organised by the Association, including a number run by local committees which it had taken under its wing with a view to increasing their efficiency.

In 1943, with the easing of priority demands, more building labour and materials became available and it was decided to build a number of specially planned centres in newly congested industrial areas. The main feature of the plans, which were separately designed for centres of 800, 500 and 300, were an assembly hall to hold about one-third of the members with a stage and dressing-rooms, a games room, reading and writing rooms, a canteen and baths. Although the cost was high—£4,000 to £7,500 according to the size of the centre—sanction was obtained for the erection of eleven centres, provided that they could be completed before the end of 1944. In fact, ten were opened between June and October and the eleventh in the following January.¹ Although these new centres only came into being during the last stages of the war, they undoubtedly helped to lessen the boredom and war weariness of workers living under conditions that gave little opportunity for rest and privacy.

Inside the factories both during working hours and in rest periods much was done to cheer up the workers and relieve the monotony of their existence by concerts and entertainments. Before the war a number of employers had made use of musical interludes in the form of radio broadcasts or the playing of gramophone records as a means of counteracting fatigue during working hours. From the summer of 1940 this practice became widespread when the B.B.C. introduced a

¹ Eight of these centres were managed by the N.A.G.C., one by the Y.W.C.A. and two by *ad hoc* committees.

special programme of 'Music While you Work', which was broadcast twice a day and, subsequently, once during the night shift as well. For these entertainments, which were generally popular with the workers, the Ministry of Labour had no responsibility, although it helped to settle a controversy with the Performing Rights Society and to reach agreement for the annual payment of a nominal sum to the Society to cover performances in all factories. For outside working hours, however, it sponsored directly an extensive scheme of concerts and entertainments, which took place both within and without factory premises. The Entertainments National Service Association (E.N.S.A.), which up to June 1940 had been giving under the auspices of N.A.A.F.I. concerts for the troops, agreed to extend its entertainments to munitions workers, and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.), which had begun to give in the neighbourhood of London dinner-hour concerts, promised to try to cover the provinces as well. Other organisations, such as the Vic-Wells Ballet and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, placed themselves at the disposal of E.N.S.A. and offers of the services of regimental and R.A.F. bands were received. The factories where concerts were to be given were selected on the advice of welfare officers, and in some cases an E.N.S.A. organiser was housed in an employment exchange. By the end of 1940 over 8,600 performances covering about 600 factories had been given by E.N.S.A. Film shows were also provided for workers on isolated construction sites and at the beginning of 1941 three mobile film units—which by 1944 had grown to thirty-six—were in operation. C.E.M.A., which provided a higher class of entertainment and whose resources were limited, was made independent of the E.N.S.A. organisation and planned its visits where managements and welfare officers indicated that it would be welcome. As a whole the fare provided and particularly the concerts given by the Service bands were well received, and employers were generally pleased with the effect upon output. But with the competing demands of the Services and industry upon E.N.S.A. administrative and financial difficulties were arising, and after an official enquiry the National Service Entertainments Board, with members drawn from the three Service departments, the Ministry of Labour, the Board of Education and N.A.A.F.I., was in May 1941 set up under the chairmanship of Lord May. Its duties were to settle general questions of policy, to determine the amount of entertainment which E.N.S.A. should provide for the different claimants, and to exercise financial control. Under these new arrangements the number of parties sent out by E.N.S.A. steadily grew, and early in 1942 over a thousand factories were benefiting, most of them to the extent of a concert a week. There were, however, fairly numerous complaints about the poor quality of many of the variety programmes provided. With the call-up depleting their ranks

there were not enough good comedians to go around, and E.N.S.A. in an attempt to raise the standard of its parties wisely decided to provide more music and fewer unfunny turns. Dissatisfaction with the programmes had, however, this good effect that it encouraged employers to develop their own workers' talents and, to take one example, the English Electric Company at Preston formed an excellent troupe of their own and were able to do without E.N.S.A.

In 1943 E.N.S.A. became persuaded that there was a desire among factory workers for good music and proposed a scheme of concerts to be given in public halls by the four leading symphony orchestras and the B.B.C. On enquiry about the potential demand welfare officers produced a list of forty centres where there were large numbers of industrial workers who had not already had an opportunity to hear this kind of music and where suitable halls were available, and the Ministry accordingly agreed that E.N.S.A. should go ahead on an experimental basis. Two concerts, however, at Southampton in May and June were so successful that approval was given to the whole of the suggested plan. Between the autumn of 1943 and the following summer four concerts were given a week, for which the price of admission was a shilling. The reception was enthusiastic and there were rarely empty seats. Other centres were added to the original list and occasionally concerts were held in the premises of a selected factory where there was enough accommodation for workers from neighbouring establishments. In contrast with the normal canteen entertainment the standard of the symphony concert was high and no attempt was made to cheapen the programme or to employ less good orchestras.

In the autumn of 1940, with the sleepless nights caused by air raids, the Ministry of Labour was anxious that at any rate women workers should, if possible, have an opportunity for a short break in restful surroundings. On referring the matter to the Central Consultative Council of Voluntary Organisations it found that its wishes had been in part at any rate anticipated. The National Association of Girls' Clubs at Liverpool had offered its hostel at Colwyn Bay as a rest home for Merseyside women. With the help of a local committee and a private guarantee of funds, the venture began in December 1940 and there was soon little doubt that it was meeting a real need. In April the Ministry made a grant for equipment and paid off the small deficit that had been incurred. In the following month the Colwyn Bay hostel had to be given up, but by generosity a suitable furnished house near Abergele with accommodation for about fifty women was made available and was finally opened in August. By the beginning of 1944 300 factories had sent 2,400 women and girls to Abergele for an average stay of a fortnight. After a smaller house had been opened at Weston-super-Mare for Bristol women, the National Association of Girls' Clubs offered to sponsor a scheme on a national basis. An advisory

committee was set up and in November 1942 the Ministry was authorised to make grants for individual projects. A gift of £25,000 from the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organisations was received in the summer of 1943 and was used to purchase and furnish more rest homes. Houses were opened at St. Annes, Hexham, Buxton and Tadworth and two at Shrewsbury, one of which was allocated for men. A charge of 25s. a week for women and 30s. for men made the houses virtually self-supporting, and by the middle of 1944 it was estimated that between 12,000 and 12,500 could be accommodated in a year for a stay of from one to two weeks.

(ii)

Inside the Factory

Provision for the safety and comfort of workers within a factory entailed much less pioneering work than the outside welfare schemes we have so far been considering. The Factories Acts, and the Orders and Regulations made under them, already laid down statutory requirements which were designed to ensure that proper standards were maintained. Moreover, beyond these legal prescriptions many progressive firms had made, often with the advice and help of the factory inspectors, additional arrangements for both the welfare of their workers and their protection against ill health and accidents. The war, however, created fresh problems. New machines involved new risks to their operators, and the large number of inexperienced workers, many of them women, introduced to factory life had to be instructed in the right and wrong way of handling a machine and in the precautions which they must learn to take to avoid unnecessary accidents. In order to emphasise the danger of apathy and to stimulate in employers and workers alike the urge to fight the battle for safety, the Ministry of Labour organised in munitions and other factories an extensive prevention of accidents campaign.¹ Moreover, the factory inspectors in the course of their visits had the matter constantly in mind and were often able to make practical suggestions for diminishing the likelihood of accidents and for giving the workers greater self-confidence at their jobs. The difficulties were greatest in some of the old-fashioned factories where accommodation was cramped and lighting was poor. Consequently, when existing premises were being enlarged or new factories built the inspectors made it their business to try to ensure that, as far as possible, the lay-out would be so planned as to provide better and safer working conditions and a higher standard of amenities for the

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories*, 1940 (Cmd. 6316), p. 5.

workers in their off-duty hours. Most of the improvements recommended by inspectors and adopted by managements were of a technical character and lie outside the scope of this book. They are fully treated in the published Annual Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories. But apart from the normal responsibilities of the Inspectorate a number of special measures, to which we may now turn, were taken largely on the initiative of the Minister himself for the care of workers inside the factories. They had three main objects in view—good health, good feeding and what may be called good human relations.

(a) FACTORY AND MEDICAL SERVICES

At the outbreak of the Second World War the scope of medical services in factories was for the most part limited to the study and prevention of industrial diseases and poisoning. The Factories Acts placed upon the medical branch of the factory inspectorate the responsibility for investigating locally cases of industrial disease or injury to health and for examining periodically workers engaged in processes involving special health hazards. For this purpose a body of Government consultants and local doctors had been appointed. But for the general supervision of the health of workers, apart from the medical examination of young persons, no statutory provision had been made. A few of the bigger employers had appointed doctors to their staff, but there were probably not more than thirty factories with a full-time medical service or more than sixty doctors engaged on a regular part-time basis. During the first eight months of the war the Home Office imposed no additional requirements for medical supervision in factories, and further developments awaited the advent of Mr. Bevin. Visualising the probable effect of long hours upon the health of workers, many of whom were new to factory life, he had no doubts of the need for a general medical supervision in factories. At the same time he recognised that, with other calls upon the medical profession, it would not be possible to insist upon its introduction in industry as a whole. At first, therefore, he inclined towards persuasion as the best means towards at least a partial realisation of his aims but, subsequently, he decided that better voluntary progress would be made, if in the background there was the sanction of compulsory powers. His views were accepted by the Home Policy Committee and in July 1940 the necessary Order was made.¹ The effect of this was to empower factory inspectors to direct employers to appoint such a number of full or part-time doctors as seemed to be required for the number of workpeople in their establishments. The Order had a good press. The British Medical Association, while doubting the possibility of adding

¹ Factories (Medical and Welfare Services) Order: S. R. & O. 1940, No. 1325.

appreciably to the number of industrial doctors, approved the Minister's action and as a mark of its goodwill set up a Committee on Industrial Health in Factories, which among its terms of reference was instructed to co-operate with Government departments and voluntary organisations in all matters affecting the health of industrial workers.

Soon after the Order was made the Ministry of Labour issued a memorandum, which was widely circulated in industry, on the duties of the industrial medical officer.¹ He was to be responsible for organising and supervising first-aid services for the treatment of injury and accident, and for the medical examination of persons about to be employed on processes involving special health risks. He would also be available for examining or advising workers who were sent to him by an employment exchange or consulted him personally. While it would be no part of his duties to treat workers in their own homes or to carry on continued treatment at the factory except with the acquiescence of the patient's own doctor, he must satisfy himself on the fitness of workers for their specific jobs on returning to the factory after a period of illness. Another of his functions would be to advise the management on matters of general hygiene including the education of the workers in habits of personal cleanliness, and generally to co-operate in arrangements for their health. The sphere of the factory doctor's responsibilities was thus defined so as not to encroach upon the province of the general practitioner. Whether as consultant or examiner, the criterion upon which his advice or decisions were to be given was the fitness of the individual to carry out a specific job; the normal ailments of a worker were a matter for his private doctor. The advantages of an efficient system of medical supervision in factories were clear enough. Whether, however, a sufficient number of doctors who were ready to undertake the work could be found or spared was another question.

The difficulty of increasing the supply of factory doctors and still more of retaining those already holding appointments was primarily due to the competition of other claims. The continuing demands of the Forces had to be met and at the same time an adequate service maintained for the civilian population from the depleted ranks of practitioners. This was a hard enough problem in itself without the additional complication of providing for a factory medical service. The situation was, moreover, aggravated by the methods by which doctors were recruited for the Services and civilian emergency appointments. This responsibility had been delegated by the Minister of Labour to the Health Minister and to the Secretary of State for Scotland, and for the discharge of their duties they had in consultation with the B.M.A. set up a Central Medical War Committee operating

¹ Factory Form 327, November 1940.

through local committees, whose recommendations were normally accepted. Under this procedure the recruiting and the retention of full and part-time medical officers for the factory service fell to be considered first by these local committees, which were largely composed of general practitioners. It was not, therefore, altogether surprising that they tended to look with disfavour upon this comparatively new service. In face of the claims of war services the employment of doctors in industry seemed a waste of scarce manpower, and some members of the committees were besides a little suspicious of the activities of these specialists. A long battle was waged by the Ministry of Labour with the local medical committees, and it would be tedious and unprofitable to narrate the endless arguments and recriminatory exchanges that took place. In October 1940 it was agreed that the recruitment of doctors to factories should be restricted to those over military age, and employers, although technically free to make their own choice, were constantly advised to consult the local medical committee before finalising their appointments. But it was over the retention of existing staff that the hardest bargaining arose, particularly after the upper age of conscription for doctors had been successively raised to forty-six and fifty-one. The Ministry of Labour was put in what for it was the unusual position of having to fight to hold back doctors whom the medical committees were anxious to withdraw for the Forces but, although it was at times accused of being obstructionist, the charge was hardly substantiated by the facts. In only six out of forty-eight cases does it appear to have opposed the recruitment of individual factory doctors whom the committees had earmarked for the Services. In a controversy of this kind tempers were likely to rise and no doubt neither side was above reproach in the methods each used to further its ends, but on the whole the results were reasonably satisfactory. Although the number of factory doctors was, as might be expected, comparatively small, by the end of 1944 there were 181 or six times as many as before the Order was made, while the number giving part-time services had increased from not more than 50 to 890.

The story of industrial nursing ran a different course. There was little difficulty in attracting applicants and the number of nurses employed grew from about 1,500 at the start of the war to 4,000 by the end of 1942 and 8,000 at the peak in August 1943. The rates of pay were comparatively good; industry was for some a welcome change from hospital life, and nurses were till 1943 unrestricted in their choice of employment. But if industry gained, the hospital services suffered from the lack of co-ordination. The most serious aspect was the number of nurses with specialist qualifications who obtained factory appointments. With a view to arresting this drift, employers were advised that the whole of their nursing staff need not be composed of fully trained nurses, but it was not till 1943 that effective steps were

taken. In February of that year a National Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives was established and drew up a list of priorities for various types of nursing employment. In April all nurses and midwives were required to register,¹ while in September they were made subject to the Control of Engagement Order, with the practical result that eligibility for further appointments in industry was restricted to those over twenty-seven years of age. For those nurses already holding factory posts the policy was to withdraw the younger and mobile and transfer them to hospital work, but, wherever possible, older immobile substitutes were found and offered before action was initiated. As a result the total number of industrial nurses was not seriously depleted. By the end of 1944 the total had only fallen to 7,800 and in May 1945 by a further 200. Of these less than a quarter were mobile and very few were under thirty years of age. The Factory Department was satisfied that in the general scarcity of nurses the nursing services in factories were adequately staffed and that further demands would be largely limited to replacements.

To the Minister of Labour the provision of medical facilities for workers in factories was not just a war time expedient: it was to become a permanent feature of industrial life.² But if this was to happen, then in his judgement it was essential that the factory medical service should retain its independent status and should not be handed over to the Ministry of Health to become the cinderella of the medical services. The medical inspectorate should be regarded as an integral part of the whole factory inspectorate and, although he had not said so in so many words, there can be little doubt that Mr. Bevin had made up his mind that the latter should continue to be the responsibility of his department and should not return to the Home Office. Accordingly, when in 1942 a White Paper on the proposed comprehensive health service was being drafted in the Ministry of Health, the Minister of Labour urged his colleague to make it clear in the Paper that the factory medical service was not included among the services for which his department would be generally responsible, but through its close link with the factory inspectorate belonged to the Ministry charged with the administration of the Factories Acts. His argument apparently convinced the Minister of Health, who expressed his willingness to put something into the White Paper that would explode the criticism, which the medical profession was finding it convenient to stress, that no medical service could be comprehensive if a separate factory service remained. The substance of Mr. Bevin's case—on the merits of which there may be, as there was at the time, room for two opinions—was epitomised in the following section in the White Paper.

¹ Nurses and Midwives (Registration for Employment) Order: S. R. & O. 1943, No. 511.

² H. of C. Deb., Vol. 382, Col. 60.

'From the point of view of industrial organisation, of working conditions in factory, mine or field there is a continuing and specialised need for enlisting medical skill in ensuring a proper working environment, a proper allocation of types of work to the individual worker's capacity, a proper standard of hygiene and a general protection of the worker's welfare. The enlistment of medical help for these purposes is part of the complex machinery of industrial organisation and welfare, and it belongs to that sphere more than to the sphere of the personal doctor or the care of personal health—which centres on the individual, his family and his home.'¹

Among the weaknesses in the war-time organisation for supervising the health of the factory workers was the absence of a single consultative body of experts, to which problems could be referred and which could co-ordinate research in the field of industrial health. Nor was there any central source from which advice and literature could be obtained. The Select Committee on National Expenditure had in December 1942 called attention to these defects,² and elsewhere criticism had been made of the inadequacy of the existing facilities for research. The Minister of Labour himself was alive to the need for action and, even before the Select Committee's report had appeared, he had decided to appoint an Industrial Health Advisory Committee. In addition to representatives of the medical profession and of industry it included officers of the Ministry of Labour and certain members of the Factory and Welfare Advisory Board, so that the work of the two bodies might be complementary. The Committee, from whose deliberations useful and constructive developments were later to emerge, held its first meeting on 5th April 1943,³ a few days before the opening of a public conference on industrial health, which was attended by representatives from many walks of life. This was the first conference of its kind ever to be held, and it gave a much needed publicity to a subject which had for too long lain neglected and unstudied.⁴

(b) INDUSTRIAL CANTEENS

In addition to medical care and hygiene, good feeding arrangements have an important influence upon the health and with it the efficiency of the industrial worker. This was particularly true under war-time conditions when the hours of work had to be lengthened and adapted to a shift system, and meals had to be taken at irregular and unusual times. Workers, specially those who were new to factory life, could

¹ Cmd. 6502, 1944.

² *Third Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, Session 1942-1943.*

³ A full list of members of the Industrial Health Advisory Committee appears each year in the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories.*

⁴ At Caxton Hall, Westminster, 9th to 11th April 1943. See *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1943* (Cmd. 6563), p. 4.

hardly be expected to last a whole day on sandwiches brought in their pockets—a diet which the hardier Northerner, however, apparently found sufficient—and distance precluded the possibility of going back to their homes or lodgings during the brief rest periods, even if with rationing their wives and landladies had been willing and able to cook them their dinners. What was wanted was an opportunity to get a satisfactory hot meal either in or near their place of work, and a canteen on the premises was the most satisfactory solution.

Some hundreds of industrial canteens had been provided during the 1914–1918 war chiefly in munitions factories, but when peace returned most of them ceased to function. In some of the bigger progressive firms, however, the canteen became an accepted feature of factory life and was used not only for meals but also for social activities outside working hours. Nevertheless, in 1939 there were far too few canteens to meet anticipated requirements, and in the spring of the next year with the speeding up of production the Government made its first move. With the co-operation of the British Employers' Confederation the Home Office set about encouraging employers to provide workers with facilities for getting a hot meal, where these did not already exist or were inadequate for current needs. The response to this appeal was considerable—some 220 new canteens were set up in a matter of two months,— but on the change of Administration the new Minister of Labour, although a firm believer in voluntary methods, decided, as he had done in the case of the factory medical service, that compulsory powers were essential as a means of ensuring that workers were properly fed. Accordingly, in November 1940 he made the Factories (Canteens) Order.¹ Under it factory inspectors were empowered to direct managements engaged on the manufacture of munitions or on other work for the Crown, who employed not less than 250 workers, to provide a suitable canteen attached to their factory or group of factories where meals could be purchased. Two months later a second Order authorised the use of the same powers for the provision of canteens for building workers on construction sites.² Arrangements were made for financial assistance towards capital expenditure on new canteens. Where a factory had been erected or extended wholly or in part at Government expense but continued to be run on a commercial basis, the supply department was authorised to bear the whole or a proportionate part of the capital cost of erecting a canteen. Firms on the other hand, which came under the Order in virtue of the Government contracts they had received, were to be pressed to provide canteens at their own expense, but in appropriate cases they could be assisted to a maximum of sixty per cent. of the cost and still retain the ownership of the canteen. At the end of 1941 this assistance was

¹ S. R. & O. 1940, No. 1993.

² S. R. & O. 1941, No. 66.

also made available to factories outside the scope of the Order with fewer than 250 employees, where the Ministry of Labour considered that a canteen was necessary.

The difficulties that arose in obtaining a satisfactory allocation of rationed and unrationed foods were a problem for the Ministry of Food to solve. The Ministry of Labour had, however, a close interest in seeing that a good service of meals was provided for workers throughout the country. Early in 1941, accordingly, it appointed six canteen advisers, who were attached to the factory inspectorate. Their duties were to visit canteens, advise managements on how to organise and run them, and to make local liaison with officers of the Ministry of Food. These experts rendered good service but, although in the course of two years their number was increased to twenty-five, there were insufficient to get round the thousands of factories which were providing canteen meals, and when in September 1943 approval was given for doubling their number, the supply of suitably qualified persons was by then so limited that only nine more were appointed. To ease the situation courses of training for canteen manageresses and for cooks, of whom there was a great scarcity, were set up. The ways in which this was done and the limited success that rewarded the efforts made have been recounted in the previous chapter.

Complaints by dissatisfied workers about the poor meals provided by some canteens and the misuse of food supplies by inefficient caterers were meanwhile mounting, and by the end of 1942 the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Food decided that strong measures must be taken. Mr. Bevin was convinced that the solution lay in the establishment of a Catering Corporation on the lines of the National Service Hostels Corporation—which would have had the effect of ousting from the field the commercial caterers, who, it was estimated, were running over a quarter of the industrial canteens. Lord Woolton's remedies were less drastic. He proposed stricter control over the issue of catering licences, a more thorough system of canteen inspection with power to require employers to remedy defects, and the compulsory setting up of works' canteens committees. In the end the Minister of Labour was persuaded to drop his controversial proposal, and the idea of compulsory canteens committees was not apparently pursued. What emerged was a firmer control of licences and a new canteen Order, which was made in April 1943.¹ This empowered the Chief Inspector of Factories to serve a notice on an employer, if his canteen was being run unsatisfactorily, to remedy the defects and, if the latter did not put things right, he could be directed by a Court to do so, with the liability for prosecution if he ignored the injunction. The scope of the Order was still confined to establishments employing 250 or more workers, but it covered all essential work and not merely munitions

¹ S. R. & O. 1943, No. 573.

and work for the Crown as the 1940 Order had done. With his hand thus strengthened, the Minister of Labour was now prepared to schedule under the Essential Work Order—as the Joint Industrial Council of the catering industry had been pressing him to do—individual canteens, provided that the wages were not lower than those paid to workers of comparable ability in the same factories. The conditions, which they would be required to observe if they were to be permitted to continue to run industrial canteens, were tactfully explained by the Minister of Food at a Press Conference to representatives of the catering industry and were well received. Although they had not heard of the Minister of Labour's idea of a Catering Corporation, some of the audience appear to have been pessimistic about their future, and it was no doubt a relief to them to know that, if they took their jobs seriously and if they did not break regulations, they would receive the blessing of both Ministries. At all events the new arrangements seem to have put caterers on their mettle, and this together with the educative work being done by the catering advisers went a long way towards raising the quality of canteen services, even although complaints continued intermittently, and sometimes justifiably, throughout the war. By 1944 the number of canteens set up by factories, to which the Order of 1940 applied, had reached the peak figure of over 5,000, or more than three times as many as were in existence before the Order was made. Even more impressive was the number of canteens provided by smaller firms not subject to compulsion, which rose from approximately 1,400 at the beginning of 1941 to over 6,800 at the end of the war.¹

(c) PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The methods by which good relations between employers and their workers can be established and maintained will obviously differ according to the numbers employed. In a small undertaking the employer can be expected to know and be known to his employees personally: in a large or middle-sized firm the employer will have to delegate his responsibilities for labour management. When this is done and there is some person who is appointed to engage workers, to supervise their working conditions and to hear and deal with grievances and complaints, it is likely that the employees will give better service than where there is no member of the staff charged with such a specific responsibility. The art of personnel management—which is the phrase now in common parlance to denote these duties—is not, however, something which can be casually acquired. It calls for qualities of human sympathy and patience, and for a trained knowledge and experience of the type of problem that is likely to arise. Between the two World Wars the Institute of Labour Management (now the

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories*, 1945 (Cmd. 6992), p. 86.

Institute of Personnel Management) and the Industrial Welfare Society had been active in encouraging firms to recognise the advantages of good industrial relations, and in providing courses of training to which suitable members of their staffs could be sent. But although at the outbreak of war there was a considerable nucleus of qualified or experienced personnel managers, there was a much larger number of persons working as welfare supervisors or otherwise employed on labour management who were untrained or only partially trained. Many factories, even some of the largest, had still no specific welfare supervision and many prejudices remained to be broken down.

Here, as in other branches of industrial welfare, it was Mr. Bevin who did most to foster better human relations between employers and workers. In the Factory and Welfare Services Order of July 1940¹ power was given to factory inspectors to direct establishments with 250 or more employees to appoint officers for the supervision of the welfare of the workers. Although the compulsion which could thus be exercised was limited to welfare supervision in the narrower sense, the Order undoubtedly served as an incentive to good personnel management. Moreover, with a view to increasing the supply of qualified persons, the Ministry decided to sponsor and to subsidise to the extent of paying fees and allowances for selected candidates an emergency course of training lasting three months, two of which were to be spent on theory and one on practical work. The syllabus included the broader aspects of labour management, so that there would be trainees of the right calibre to take posts as personnel managers, if employers could be persuaded to make such appointments. At the beginning of 1941 a further step was taken. Faced with the problem of obtaining and keeping enough women in war industries the Ministry issued a manual of guidance for employers on the employment of women, which explained the place and function of the personnel manager, and recommended that in the larger firms a woman personnel manager should be appointed.²

As a result of the Order and the prompt follow-up action of inspectors the demand for welfare supervisors threatened to outstrip the supply. To help to make good this deficiency the Ministry of Supply in November 1941 instituted a six weeks' training course for untrained assistants in Royal Ordnance Factories, but these arrangements did not touch the problem in agency factories. At the beginning of 1942 the Women's Consultative Committee called attention to the seriousness of the position especially in aircraft firms, and the Select Committee on National Expenditure in its December report criticised the supply departments for what it considered to be a lack of interest in the welfare of their workers. Improvements, however, could only come

¹ S. R. & O. 1940, No. 1325.

² P.L. 87/1941.

about slowly because of the scarcity of qualified persons, and the most effective line of action seemed to be the provision of more opportunities for training for unqualified assistants. With the encouragement of the Ministry of Labour various London and provincial colleges started evening courses, and for candidates from aircraft firms three months' courses were run at Edinburgh University, while in the meantime an experienced personnel officer was appointed by the Minister of Aircraft Production with a staff of ten regional assistants to develop personnel management in aircraft factories. In face of all the difficulties it was not to be expected that any spectacular results would be achieved. Even in the narrower field of welfare supervision the Ministry of Labour made a very sparing use of its powers of direction, only seventeen formal directions being issued during the war. This was wise policy. It was not much good ordering employers to make appointments, unless it was reasonably certain that suitable persons could be found or trained for the work. In the wider sphere of labour management, where the Ministry of Labour had no statutory powers to intervene, there were also prejudices to be overcome against what some employers regarded as an unnecessary institution. Advice, encouragement and education were the only weapons in the Ministry's hands, and of these it made an effective use. Although progress was far from uniform, the arrangements for the handling of workers in industry were certainly much better at the end than at the beginning of the war. Moreover, the Ministry gained valuable experience in its rôle of unofficial adviser, and out of this emerged the Personnel Management Advisory Service, which was of considerable assistance to employers during the post-war reconstruction period.

We shall conclude this chapter with a short account of the special arrangements made for the welfare of two classes of workers in whom Mr. Bevin had a personal interest—the dockers and the merchant seamen.

(iii)

Special Schemes

(a) DOCKS CANTEENS

Congestion at the docks had begun when with the occupation of the Channel ports shipping was diverted to Britain, and by the autumn of 1940 following the air raids on London the west coast ports had to handle the bulk of the sea-going traffic. Emergency measures had, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, been introduced by which dockers could be required to work after normal hours in the evening or to transfer to other ports.¹ Facilities for obtaining reasonable meals were, however, quite inadequate and welfare workers reported that transferred

¹ See above p. 140.

men were having to queue at small confectioners for their mid-day meal. Of the existing docks canteens some were run by the Port Authorities, while others were let out to catering contractors, but few of them provided freshly cooked food. The eating-houses in the vicinity were extensively patronised by the dockers, though few were open in the evenings or at the week-end, and in many the standard of service and cleanliness left much to be desired. The problem of how to provide more and better feeding facilities had to some extent been tackled by arranging for mobile canteens to relieve the congestion at small cafés, but inside the dock premises, except at Liverpool, little constructive action was in hand or seemed likely without a strong lead from the Government. Even in the Liverpool docks it was doubtful whether the additional canteens that were being erected by the Dock Labour Board would be sufficient or quickly enough available, unless legal sanctions were imposed. The Minister accordingly decided to make an Order. As it would have been impracticable to have required individual dock employers to set up canteens either as separate or joint concerns, the most convenient body on which to put the onus was the Port Authority. The special Order, which was made in February 1941,¹ accordingly placed an obligation upon the Port Authority, if directed by the factory inspector, to provide and maintain in a clean and orderly condition a suitable canteen where hot meals could be purchased at reasonable times by dockers and other workers employed in the ports. Notices were promptly served on dock authorities, but with few exceptions they accepted the responsibility with goodwill and without undue pressure from the Ministry of Labour. Some delays were almost inevitable. There were difficulties in obtaining suitable sites for new canteens and building labour and materials for erecting them, while, as in the case of the industrial canteens, there was the problem of the allocation of sufficient supplies of rationed and unrationed foods. In no case, however, did the Ministry seek, as it was empowered to do under the Order, a Court direction. By the end of July 1941 seven additional docks canteens had been established as a result of notices served by the Ministry, and by April 1942 the number had more than doubled till in the middle of 1943 it had reached a total of 171. Outside the docks British restaurants augmented the facilities, and in the London dock area in the autumn of 1941 there was greater capacity of this kind than was normally needed. The restaurants were, accordingly, regarded as providing an ample emergency service should enemy action deprive the docks of its other canteens.

(b) SEAMEN'S WELFARE

The need for Maritime States to take a more active interest in the welfare of seamen when they came ashore was recognised at the

¹ The Docks (Provision of Canteens) Order, S. R. & O. 1941, No. 202.

International Labour Conference in Geneva in 1936, when a recommendation¹ was adopted, which among other things proposed that in important ports official committees should be set up to advise their Governments on the best ways of improving or extending existing facilities. The recommendation was accepted by the British Government, but action to put it into effect was delayed for a number of years through disagreement on the necessity for a central committee or, if it were established, whether the voluntary organisations, which had hitherto looked after the spiritual and temporal welfare of seamen, should be represented on it. Soon after he assumed office Mr. Bevin decided that seamen's welfare should be handled on the same lines as the welfare of the industrial worker. Accordingly, in October 1940 he appointed under his own chairmanship the Seamen's Welfare Advisory Board, which was similarly constituted to the Factory and Welfare Advisory Board, and, in order that the Ministry and the Board might avail themselves of the knowledge and experience of the voluntary organisations, a central consultative committee was formed of representatives from the different bodies concerned. The functions of the Board were to advise the Minister on all questions affecting the welfare of British, allied and foreign seamen in British ports, and in particular to co-ordinate and improve the hostel and recreational facilities. On the recommendation of the Board, Port Welfare Committees were set up in the principal ports of the country, and seamen's welfare officers were appointed to act as secretaries of the committees and to stimulate and regulate the work of the different voluntary organisations in their areas.

These measures bore good fruit. Between 1942 and 1944 a number of hostels and clubs were opened. The former offered residential accommodation and included a hotel in London where seamen and their wives could put up. The latter, some of which were sponsored by the British War Relief Society of America, provided all sorts of recreational facilities including billiard rooms, dining rooms and bars. Both the hostels and the clubs were outstanding successes and were used to the full by officers and men of the Merchant Navy. Among the other developments were the extension by voluntary organisations of their clubs and hostels; the provision of canteens and waiting-rooms near the Merchant Navy's Reserve Pool Offices; better sanitary arrangements; and more effective safeguards against accidents for persons using the docks by night. Nor were the seamen from overseas forgotten. Separate hostels and clubs were provided for those from the Colonies, India and China at the larger ports, while the different allied Governments made separate arrangements for seamen from their countries.²

¹ Recommendation No. 48.

² *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. 122-123.

CHAPTER XXIV

WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

(i)

Wages

IN FORMULATING the principles upon which economic policy should be built in the event of a major war in which all the resources of the nation would be engaged, Government planners had as early as 1929 emphasized the need for a control over the movement of wages, if a dangerous inflation was to be avoided. Labour was likely to be scarce and, failing control by the Government, higher wages would be offered and paid to workers and this would be soon reflected in higher prices in the shops. Conversely, higher prices for at least the necessities of life would create an irresistible demand for wage increases. The vicious spiral of inflation that would be thus set in motion—so the argument continued—could only be arrested if each of the two component factors, prices and wages, was brought under control. Although the soundness of this argument was not contested, from 1929 down to the outbreak of war the idea of a central control of wages progressively lost favour. The main reasons for this change of attitude had little or nothing to do with economic theory or anti-inflationist considerations. They were social and psychological. Their champion was the Ministry of Labour, which insistently maintained that the workers would never agree to surrender their right of bargaining for higher wages. If prices were held in check, representatives of employers and workers could be trusted, through the joint negotiating machinery which had brought the two sides closer together, to observe a realistic restraint in dealing with demands for higher wages; whereas any attempt to impose external control would lead to industrial unrest, which would both weaken morale and disrupt the whole economy of the country.

During the first eight months of the war the feasibility of a central control of wages was canvassed at meetings of the National Joint Advisory Council, which the Minister of Labour had set up as a forum for the discussion of manpower problems. But the representatives of the workers were adamant and a cogent speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which he emphasised the serious financial straits in which the country was placed, did little or nothing to weaken their opposition. The case which they presented was that, until there were clear indications that the Government was taking effective steps to

hold down the rising cost of living by a control of prices and to stop profiteering—the bug-bear of the unions—it was useless to talk to workers of regulation of their wages. But behind these professed objections lay a deep mistrust of the Chamberlain Government and this, it may scarcely be doubted, was the real explanation of the impasse which negotiations had reached. This was the situation when Ernest Bevin became Minister of Labour.¹

MR. BEVIN'S ATTITUDE TO CONTROL OF WAGES

In his approach to the question of the regulation of wages the new Minister was influenced by two main considerations. First, he recognised that the responsibility he had been given of supplying and distributing manpower to meet essential requirements was dependent upon there being an appropriate rate of wages for the different jobs that had to be done. Workers could not be expected to change their employment, if the transference would involve for them a serious loss of money. Conversely, if the competing offers of higher wages by employers in the munitions industries were allowed to continue, there would be a restless movement of workers in pursuit of higher earnings. To overcome these two obstacles to an orderly re-deployment of manpower some measure of regulation of wages might be necessary. Secondly, the Minister was anxious that in whatever measures he decided to take he should have the support of the associations of employers and the trade unions. To override their objections would merely precipitate industrial strife. He, therefore, decided to feel his way and, before determining his policy, to test the reactions of industry and of his colleagues in the Government.

At his first meeting with the National Joint Advisory Council he indicated that some changes in the methods of adjusting wages might become necessary, but he promised that, as far as possible, the joint negotiating machinery would be kept intact. Less than a week later he invited the Joint Consultative Committee, which the Council had set up, to consider what were the best ways of removing wage problems from the field of controversy, and whether a plan could be devised whereby for at least the next eight months all industries would be treated alike in the question of wages. Would it be, for example, possible to set up a responsible tribunal which at periodical intervals could either itself determine, or recommend for the guidance of the negotiating bodies in the various industries, a uniform basis on which the wages of all industries would be adjusted? If, on the other hand, all industries could not be treated alike, would it be desirable to make arbitration compulsory after the negotiating machinery had failed to produce a settlement?² These questions, which the Minister had

¹ See above, pp. 81-82.

² See above, pp. 133-134.

referred to the War Cabinet, reflected his growing belief that he could not effectively carry out his duty of issuing orders for the regulation of labour unless he could give the workers the conviction that they were receiving fair treatment in the matter of wages. In this respect he supported a proposal made by the Minister of Agriculture, and subsequently approved by the War Cabinet despite its inflationary tendencies, for a subsidy to be paid to farmers to enable an increase to be made in the wages of agricultural workers. At their present low level he would not be able to secure a return to agriculture of a substantial number of workers who had gone into industry, or to force the employees of local authorities, who were receiving ten shillings more a week, to go to work on the land.

In the course of a few days the Minister seemed to have become more convinced that, in order to create the conditions under which manpower could be redistributed in accordance with national needs, some measure of compulsion might have to be introduced into the field of wages; but there is nothing to show that he was going back on his earlier promise to the National Joint Advisory Council that, as far as possible, the joint negotiating machinery would be retained in force.

ORDER 1305

On 4th June the Joint Consultative Committee presented its unanimous reply to the questions which the Minister had referred to it. Beginning with a declaration that during the period of emergency there should be no stoppage of work owing to trade disputes, it made the following recommendations. The existing machinery in industry for dealing with questions of wages and conditions of employment should continue in force; but, when this failed to produce a settlement, the matter in dispute should be referred to arbitration for a decision which would be binding on all parties. In any industry where there was no provision for such arbitration, the parties should have the option of setting it up themselves and, failing that, the matter in dispute should be referred for decision to a National Arbitration Tribunal to be appointed by the Minister of Labour. In return for accepting compulsory arbitration, the Joint Consultative Committee asked that the Minister should take powers to secure that wages and conditions of employment settled by negotiation or arbitration would be binding on all employers and workers in the trade or industry concerned. Lastly, it recommended that any dispute not covered by the above provisions should be brought to the notice of the Minister and, if the matter could not otherwise be settled, should be referred by him within a specified period of, say, three weeks to the National Arbitration Tribunal; and meanwhile no strike or lock-out should take place.

These recommendations were generally acceptable. There was, however, a somewhat prolonged controversy between the trade

unionists on the Joint Consultative Committee and the Ministry of Labour about the circumstances in which negotiated wage settlements should be binding upon all establishments employing similar grades of workers. The trade unionists proposed that, where there was no substantial organisation of employers and workers, a settlement reached between an individual employer and a union should be deemed the recognised rate of wages for the particular job, and become binding on all other establishments. To this the Ministry of Labour replied that it had not the power to make voluntarily negotiated rates statutorily binding. At some stage the matter would have to be referred to a Government sponsored authority, and the Ministry proposed that, where it was alleged that an employer was paying less than the recognised rate of wages, a complaint could be made to the Minister who would then refer the matter to the National Arbitration Tribunal for a ruling which would be statutorily enforceable. The differences between the Ministry and the unions were not settled in discussion and, when in July an Order No. 1305¹ (of which a copy will be found appended) embodying the other recommendations of the Joint Consultative Committee was made, provision for the enforcement of negotiated wages was based on the principles that had been proposed by the Ministry—with the significant modification that a favourable ruling by the National Arbitration Tribunal on a specific complaint would only apply to the particular employer against whom the complaint had been made. The trade unionists were disappointed at the outcome; but on an assurance being given by the Minister that he would, if requested by any industry, be prepared to appoint a single arbitrator to whom a dispute could be referred for a legally binding settlement, they were reassured; and when the Order came up for review in December 1940 they did not press for its amendment on this account.

The new Order met with a cool reception from the advocates both within and without Government circles of a tidy system of controls. The National Arbitration Tribunal might prevent strikes, but it could not—so *The Times* argued—give any guarantee that wage movements would be kept stable or in check.² The new machinery had all the failings of the Committee on Production of the First World War.³ It could deal with only a very limited part of the field of wages and could do nothing to introduce uniformity into the medley of district and piece-work rates in the engineering industry. A judicious mixture of conciliation and compulsory arbitration, the Order did nothing openly, and perhaps could do nothing at all, to remove the danger of a wages spiral. These prognostications, which events were to prove

¹ Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, 1940. See below pp. 448-454.

² Editorial in *The Times*, 22nd July 1940.

³ See above p. 8.

unduly alarmist, did not divert the Government from its chosen path. Wages policy was now to be developed by a combination of faith and works—faith in the moderating influence of the trade unions, and action to control the cost of living.

STABILISATION OF PRICES

The steps by which prices were stabilised may be briefly told. In July 1940 an increase in home agricultural prices and a rise in shipping charges threatened to add four points to the cost-of-living index. If this took place, then wage increases would automatically follow for some 2½ million workers employed in industries whose system of wages was tied to the cost-of-living index, and from other industries there would be pressure for higher rates of pay. Rather than let this happen, the Government in August agreed to keep down the price of essential foodstuffs by subsidies—which had first been introduced as a temporary expedient in December 1939—so as to hold the index steady and prevent a rise in wages.¹ Luxury foods were to be left to find their own price levels. This decision left undetermined the position of a large number of foodstuffs, such as oatmeal, rabbits, coffee and a variety of groceries, which were neither essential nor luxuries. At the end of the year it was decided to control the price of them by Maximum Price Orders and to keep the food index pegged by further subsidies, if necessary. In consequence the food index, which had risen from 114 in June 1940 to 125 in the following December fell to 122 in March 1941.²

But food was not the only important item in the cost-of-living index. There were also coal and clothes, and in each of them prices were going up. The fuel index had risen from 116 in June 1940 to 119 in the following March, partly because of wage increases and partly through other measures to help the depressed coalfields. More serious was the rise in the clothing index from 137 in June 1940 to 155 in December and to 168 in March 1941. It was not, however, till April 1941 that a general prices policy was finally adopted. This was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budget speech. To prevent a further rise in prices and consequently of wages, the Exchequer, he said, was now prepared to undertake a much greater burden and in particular, by subsidising the increased charges of shipping and transport, to minimise their impact on the prices of essential goods and services. He hoped that by these means the cost-of-living index could be kept within the range of 125–130 and that wages could be held at about their current levels. If, however, a cycle of wage increases set in, the stabilisation of prices policy would have to be abandoned.³

¹ See above p. 82.

² See further W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing: *British War Economy*, pp. 333-334.

³ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 370, Col. 1322-1324.

The Chancellor's announcement of the Government's policy for stabilising prices naturally raised the question whether steps should not be taken as a corollary to stabilise wages. The Ministry of Labour continued its strong opposition to this proposal on two main grounds. First, good industrial relations depended upon the unions exercising their authority in day-to-day adjustments of wages and conditions of employment; and, secondly, facilities for making and having claims for increases in wages discussed were an essential condition of industrial peace. In answer to the critics who had argued that the absence of a central regulation of wages was a deterrent to placing and keeping workers where they were most required, the Ministry was able to show that this admitted difficulty had been largely surmounted by the scheduling of firms engaged on important production under the provisions of the Essential Work Order, which had been made a month earlier. To such firms the Minister was now prepared to direct workers, who would further be prevented from leaving their employment without the permission of his department. This loss of personal freedom was compensated by the guarantee of a weekly wage, whether the workers were engaged on piece or time-work. The Lord President's Committee was impressed by the arguments against wage stabilisation. Nevertheless, it was anxious to issue a broad statement setting out the Government's economic policy, which would among other things make reference to the need for restraint in wages. There were some fears, which proved in fact to be justified, that when the draft was shown to the Trades Union Congress they would reply that they had heard all this before in 1939 when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, had addressed the National Joint Advisory Council. The published White Paper, was in consequence, a well-watered-down version of the original. To avoid any suspicion that wages would be directly controlled, a statement was inserted that in exceptional cases wage increases might be permitted. The circumstances in which such claims would be justified would be where productivity had increased; or where there were low-paid grades of workers; or where there had been changes in the form and volume of production.¹

WAGE INCREASES

The first important increase in wages after the publication of the White Paper in July 1941 was a rise of 12s. a week for agricultural workers, bringing their weekly national minimum wage up to 60s. This claim had originally been put forward in April and the Minister of Labour had asked that it should be settled before the Government made public its wages policy. The 'settlement' upon which the Agricultural Wages Board decided was to defer a consideration of the

¹ Cmd. 6294, *Price Stabilisation and Industrial Policy*.

claim for six months until after the harvest was gathered. This was hotly criticised in the House of Commons in August.¹ The unions, which were aware that they had succeeded in convincing the independent members of the Wages Board that a 6s. rise was justifiable, appealed to the Minister of Labour who intervened on their behalf. Believing that the workers had made out a sound case and that no financial difficulty should be allowed to stand in the way of meeting a genuine need for higher wages, he succeeded in persuading his colleagues that a 6s. rise was justifiable and informed the unions that their claim would fall within the terms of the White Paper. Meanwhile the Agricultural Wages Board was being pressed by the County Agricultural Wages Committees to raise the national minimum weekly wage to 6os. and in November awarded the full amount of the workers' claim. The size of this increase of 12s. alarmed the Minister of Labour no less than the Treasury. It had the effect of throwing out of balance the lower end of the wages scale. Agricultural wages had always been slightly lower than the minimum railway wages; now they were higher. It would be difficult, therefore, to resist claims from other less well-paid workers. In December the railwaymen put in their claim and the Lord President's Committee had to agree to increase their minimum to 6os.

So far the increases in wages had been for grades of low-paid workers, but the situation was made more dangerous when a demand was put in for a weekly rise of 5s. for the comparatively highly-paid workers in the engineering and shipbuilding industries. This claim had been turned down by the employers and had been referred to the National Arbitration Tribunal. If it were conceded, as in fact it was in December 1941, it might be the beginning of another general upward movement of wages. The question was whether the Government should take power to control wages as it had already done to control prices. The Minister of Labour was against such a step. Earnings, he admitted, had risen by July by forty-three per cent. above the level ruling at the outbreak of war, whereas the cost-of-living index had only gone up by twenty-eight per cent. On the other hand, wage rates had increased by only eighteen per cent. The imposition of a rigid control of wages would not be acceptable, unless the Government was at the same time prepared to apply similar controls to other financial aspects of production. If the trade unions were once again asked to restrain wages, they would demand further controls over profits and salaries and comprehensive regulations for industry as a whole. Such revolutionary changes were as inopportune as they would be undesirable. Turning to the question of earnings the Minister insisted that it was only right that a man who was giving of his best, and thereby increasing output,

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 373, Col. 2177-2216.

should be suitably rewarded, and he was able to produce figures¹ to demonstrate that as between industries earnings had risen proportionately higher in those that were the more closely connected with the war effort. The Minister's defence convinced his colleagues and brought to an end once and for all discussions within the Government about the advisability of a direct control over wages.

It was hardly surprising that workers in the lower-paid industries felt some bitterness at the higher earnings of their neighbours on what might often seem less arduous jobs and at the better living conditions that their wives and children enjoyed. The resentment was strong among the miners and the apparent lack of sympathy with their case had led to unofficial strikes. In May 1942 over 53,000 working days were lost. The miners' leaders pressed the Government to agree to their members' claim for an increase of wages, pointing out in support of their case that coal-mining was as low as fifty-nine in a list of some two or three hundred industries arranged in order of wages. The claim was referred to the Greene Board for investigation, and in July it raised the minimum wage of underground workers to 83s. a week and of surface-men to 78s.² It was, of course, impossible to isolate the effects of this latter increase, and other claims for higher wages for comparable work could not well be turned down. The railwaymen were granted a rise of 5s.,³ and county roadmen in the Midlands received an additional 4s. to their weekly wage. About the same time workers in the woollen and worsted industry, whose wage scales were tied to the cost-of-living index, obtained increases in departure from that principle.⁴ However sensible or defensible this piecemeal treatment of wages might appear to the Government, its failure to devise a constructive wages policy for industry as a whole was sharply criticised in *The Times*⁵ and was the subject of a debate in both Houses of Parliament.⁶ Familiar arguments were used by speakers on either side, but the Minister of Labour in his reply dealt with wider issues of policy and, in particular, emphasised the care with which industrial self-government had been fostered and the imprudence of setting aside the joint negotiating machinery that had brought employers and workers into closer sympathy with each other, until it had been shown to have failed completely. His speech seems to have made an impression upon the House; at any rate the debate in October 1942 was really the last occasion on which the Government's wages policy was seriously challenged in Parliament.

¹ See *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, November 1941, pp. 215-216.

² See W. H. B. Court: *Coal*, pp. 221-224.

³ This was made retrospective to June 1942 (*Ministry of Labour Gazette*, January 1943, p. 13).

⁴ *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, August 1942, pp. 152 and 156.

⁵ *The Times* 14th August, 1942.

⁶ H. of L. Deb., Vol. 124, Col. 425-433 and H. of C. Deb., Vol. 383, Col. 2057-2062.

Speaking in the House of Commons in the following January the Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted that wages had risen at a greater rate than the cost-of-living index, but there was peace and goodwill in industry.¹ Nevertheless, criticism from outside was not silenced. As late as midsummer 1943 the *Economist* was still calling attention to what it believed were the dangerous consequences of the unwillingness of the Government to accept the necessity of a unified wages policy.²

The stabilisation of prices undoubtedly was a brake upon demands for higher wages; but the cost-of-living index was only kept steady by manipulating the ways in which subsidies were applied to its component elements—a process which during 1942 and 1943 reached a high degree of sophistication. To take an example—when the Greene Board raised the national minimum wage of miners in the summer of 1942 the Government refused to make good by a subsidy, as it had in the case of agriculture, the cost of higher wages, and decided that the consumer should feel the effect of rising wages for the miners in the price he had to pay for his coal. In this way it hoped, too, to protect itself in advance against demands for subsidies from other industries faced with compelling claims for increases in wages. In order to keep the index stable, the Government decided to apply a subsidy not to coal, but to another commodity entering prominently into the cost of living. It selected sugar which was one of the most overweighted items in the official index. But there were limits to the performance of these balancing tricks. If further increases of wages were not reflected in the cost-of-living index, the general public would lose confidence in its validity as a measuring machine. At the beginning of 1944 the Government was again faced with higher wages in coal-mining, as a result of the Porter award which raised the national minimum wage for underground miners to £5. a week.³ The Government had the choice of subsidising the industry or of allowing the cost-of-living index to go up. It decided on the latter course, and this was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his April budget speech. He informed the House that he was now prepared to let the cost-of-living index range between 130 and 135, as compared with 125 and 130 which were the limits laid down by his predecessor in 1941. At the same time he assured the House that the existing policy of price control would not be changed and that subsidies as a means of stabilising the cost of living would continue to operate.⁴

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 386, Col. 413.

² See the *Economist*, 19th June 1943, and cp. 26th December, 1942.

³ See W. H. B. Court: *Coal* pp. 254-261.

⁴ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 399, Col. 659-663.

Table 33: Prices and Wages

	Cost-of-living index (all items)	Index of weekly wage rates (all industries)*	Index of weekly wage rates (manufacturing and certain other industries)†	Index of average weekly earnings‡ (manufacturing and certain other industries)§
	1 Sept. 1939 = 100	Sept. 1939 = 100	Oct. 1938 = 100	Oct. 1938 = 100
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)
1938 October	—	—	100	100
1939 September	100	100	—	—
1940 January	112	105-106	—	—
July	121	113-114	110-111	130
1941 January	126	118	—	—
July	128	122	118	142
1942 January	129	127	122	146
July	129	131-132	124	160
1943 January	128	133	126-127	165
July	129	136-137	130	176
1944 January	128	139-140	132	179
July	130	143-144	135-136	182
1945 January	130	145-146	138-139	176
July	133½	150-151	143	180

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

* The estimates cover all the principal industries and services.

† The non-manufacturing industries included are mining (other than coal-mining), building and contracting, transport and communications (other than railways), gas, water and electricity supply, local authority (non-trading) services, government industrial establishments, and laundries and dry-cleaning.

‡ The figures represent the average earnings (including bonus, overtime etc., and before deductions of income tax or insurance contributions) in one week in the months indicated. Administrative and clerical workers and other salaried persons have been excluded.

§ See note † above.

REVIEW OF WAGES AND EARNINGS

In order that a fair assessment may be made of the Government's wages policy, we shall now examine in more detail the war-time variations in the scale of wages and earnings relative to the cost-of-living index. Table 33 provides a convenient summary.¹

When the Government in April 1941 announced its policy of stabilising prices, the cost-of-living index was 28 per cent. above the pre-war level. During the next three years there was little appreciable

¹ See further Statistical Appendix, Tables XII, XIII, and XIV.

change and, even after it was decided in April 1944 to allow the index to range between 130 and 135, for the remainder of that year it never exceeded 130, and it was not until July 1945 that after a slight rise in the spring of that year it reached its highest point of the war—133½.

During the first eighteen months of the war the basic wage rates in almost all industries rose considerably, and it is noteworthy that in general the increases were greater in industries whose wage systems were tied to the cost-of-living index than in industries in which wages were settled by direct negotiation. During the next year, while the cost of living remained stable, wage rates continued to increase and at July 1942 were 31 to 32 per cent. above pre-war level, as compared with a rise of 29 per cent. in the cost of living. By comparison, if we look at column (iv) of the table, we shall see that in the group of manufacturing and certain other industries—which included the industries most closely engaged in the output of munitions—the increase in basic weekly wages was more gradual and did not overtake the increase in the cost of living until July 1943. This trend continued until at the end of the war, whereas the average level of weekly wage rates for all industries was 50–51 per cent. above the pre-war level, the average level for the manufacturing and other industries group had increased by 43 per cent., as compared with the increase of 33½ per cent. in the cost-of-living index. The most important industries not included in column (iv) are agriculture, coal-mining and the railway services, and it was in these industries, in which the rates of remuneration were notoriously low, that during the war the workers were progressively awarded higher wages. It may, therefore, be concluded that it was wage increases in these poorly-paid industries that largely account for the difference between the index for all industries and the index for the large group of manufacturing industries.

By contrast with wages, the average earnings for all workers in the manufacturing group of industries rose steeply during the war years. By July 1940 they were already 30 per cent., and two years later 60 per cent., above the pre-war level, whereas at that date wages had only risen 24 per cent. Subsequently, the rate slowed down and the index of average weekly earnings, after reaching in July 1944 a peak of 182, stood at the end of the war at 180 as compared with a wages index of 143 for the same group of industries. These differences between the scale of earnings and basic wages reflected, of course, the conditions of employment. After the fall of France very long hours in a seven-day week were being worked and, although subsequently, in the interests no less of production than of the workers, these practices were modified, overtime with night shifts and week-end work, for all of which workers were paid at rates above their normal wages, continued until comparatively late in the war. Moreover, there was a wide expansion of piecework, and a system of payments by results was favoured by many

employers as an incentive to higher output; a worker could thus in the course of a normal week's work earn considerable increments to the basic wage to which he was entitled.

From the analysis of earnings shown in Table 34 some further interesting facts emerge. Over the whole period of the war the increased earnings of women were proportionately higher than those of men; whereas, for example, in July 1944 the average weekly earnings of men were 80 per cent., those of women were 98 per cent., above the pre-war level. Secondly, the largest increases in men's earnings occurred between the summer of 1940 and the summer of 1942, but from then onwards women's earnings rose at a proportionately higher rate than those for men. An explanation of these features is provided by the progressive stages in which women were drawn into employment in the munitions and other essential industries and services. Although during 1940 and 1941 numbers of women were already at work in these occupations, it was from 1942 onwards with a famine of male labour that they were extensively used to do jobs for which under normal conditions men would have been engaged. In 1943 thousands of women—many of them at men's rates of pay—were employed in the all out drive for aircraft, and from the middle of that year onwards the increases in their earnings mounted to over 100 per cent. But it was in the transport industry in the last year of the war that the highest percentage increases in women's earnings took place. To replace the men who had been called up or transferred to other work, women were in great demand as conductresses on tramways and buses. In many cases they qualified to receive a man's full rate of pay and were prepared to work overtime. On an average the increase in their weekly earnings ranged from 126 to 134 per cent.—a most striking contrast with the small 25 per cent. rise recorded for July 1940 over the pre-war level.

We are now in a position to evaluate the Government's wages policy. The fears that, despite the fiscal measures taken to keep the cost of living stable, wages would get out of hand and cause a dangerous degree of inflation, had proved to be exaggerated. In the group of industries that were most vital to the production programme, the upward movement of wage rates was until July 1943 still below the level of the increase in the cost of living even after the stabilisation of prices and, although thereafter the position was reversed, at the end of the war the increase in wage rates above the pre-war level was only 9.5 per cent. more than the increase in the cost of living during the same period. It is true that in industry as a whole the average rate of wage increases was higher than in the manufacturing group, but this was, we have suggested, largely due to the progressive award of increased wages to workers in the least-well-paid industries. The inflationary effects can hardly have been serious.

Table 34: Changes in average weekly earnings* in the years 1938-1945

	Manufacturing and certain other industries†	Chemicals, explosives, paints and oils	Metals, engineering and shipbuilding	Textiles	Clothing‡	Food, drink and tobacco	Building and contracting	Transport, storage, etc.
(A) AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF MEN (21 YEARS AND OVER)								
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
1938 October.	69 0	69 3	75 0	57 3	64 3	65 3	66 0	70 0
1940 July .	89 0	87 9	102 5	75 10	71 10	76 4	84 11	85 2
1941 July .	99 5	98 5	112 2	81 6	83 7	87 4	97 1	92 2
1942 January.	102 0	100 2	119 2	84 6	85 0	88 3	84 2	92 10
July .	111 5	107 11	128 1	90 5	91 4	93 1	102 0	99 1
1943 January.	113 9	110 9	131 6	93 5	95 0	96 9	94 8	99 9
July .	121 3	116 3	138 3	96 11	98 9	101 8	103 4	104 2
1944 January.	123 8	120 2	141 10	97 8	101 2	104 0	101 6	108 3
July .	124 4	120 5	139 1	101 10	105 3	106 6	107 11	114 3
1945 January.	119 3	118 0	131 2	100 4	106 5	106 7	104 5	110 10
July .	121 4	122 10	133 0	104 7	110 8	110 4	111 4	114 10

PERCENTAGE INCREASE SINCE OCTOBER 1938

1940 July .	29	27	37	32	12	17	29	22
1941 July .	44	42	50	42	30	34	47	32
1942 January.	48	45	59	48	32	35	28	33
July .	61	56	71	58	42	43	55	42
1943 January.	65	60	75	63	48	48	43	43
July .	76	68	84	69	54	56	64	49
1944 January.	79	73	89	71	57	59	54	55
July .	80	74	85	78	64	63	64	63
1945 January.	73	70	75	75	66	63	58	58
July .	76	77	77	83	72	69	69	64

(B) AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF WOMEN (18 YEARS AND OVER)

	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
1938 October.	32 6	32 8	33 4	31 9	32 9	32 11	—	34 11
1940 July .	38 11	37 3	43 10	40 5	36 3	35 4	—	43 6
1941 July .	43 11	44 11	48 1	42 0	41 2	40 3	—	59 6
1942 January.	47 6	48 2	53 7	43 4	41 2	41 6	—	60 7
July .	54 2	56 5	60 7	48 5	47 1	45 11	—	67 5
1943 January.	58 6	61 4	66 5	50 3	48 4	47 11	—	67 2
July .	62 2	63 7	69 10	52 11	50 3	50 10	—	71 5
1944 January.	63 9	65 3	71 8	53 8	50 10	53 1	—	74 8
July .	64 3	64 11	71 0	55 7	53 4	53 11	—	79 1
1945 January.	63 2	62 1	70 4	53 9	53 0	54 8	—	78 7
July .	63 2	62 10	69 1	58 2	55 7	56 7	—	81 7

PERCENTAGE INCREASE SINCE OCTOBER 1938

1940 July .	20	14	32	27	11	7	—	25
1941 July .	35	38	44	32	26	22	—	70
1942 January.	46	47	61	36	26	26	—	74
July .	67	73	82	52	44	39	—	93
1943 January.	80	88	99	58	48	46	—	92
July .	91	95	110	67	53	54	—	105
1944 January.	96	100	115	69	55	61	—	114
July .	98	99	113	75	63	64	—	126
1945 January.	94	94	111	70	58	75	—	131
July .	94	92	107	83	70	72	—	134

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

* See note ‡ to Table 33. † See note † to Table 33. ‡ Including laundries and dry-cleaning.

More significant than the rise in wages were the increases in earnings. In retrospect it may seem as if these were inordinately large, but against such a judgement must be set the purpose which they served and attained. Without the incentive of substantial rewards workers could not reasonably be expected to give the extra time that was asked of them, nor to put into their work the special efforts that were required to increase and accelerate their normal output. The price that was paid may have been high; what it achieved was indispensable. Moreover, high earnings made for contented workers, and it is significant that production—until late in the war at any rate—was comparatively little retarded by stoppages due to industrial disputes.

Perhaps the best test of the soundness of a policy is the simple one of examining its consequences. On this practical criterion, the refusal of the Government to impose a central control upon wages and its determination to rely on the machinery of voluntary industrial negotiations, which at the time caused in some quarters serious misgivings, in the outcome are shown to have been wise decisions. The policy largely succeeded because it was built upon an understanding of the character and reactions of the British worker.

(ii)

Trade Boards and Wages Councils

Before we leave the subject of wages and go on to consider other conditions of employment, we must review the progress that was made in providing industries that were not yet in a position to form joint industrial councils with machinery for regulating their scales of remuneration. It will be remembered that in the years that immediately succeeded the passing of the Trade Boards Act of 1919 trade boards had been set up for a considerable number of industries in which there were grades of exceptionally low-paid workers, but that subsequently the movement had slowed down.¹ This was due in part to political reasons, and in part to technical difficulties inherent in the Act. A trade board could only be set up for a defined 'trade', and in such a miscellaneous group as retail distribution it was difficult to reach an agreed basis of demarcation. Furthermore, the powers of trade boards were rigidly restricted to fixing minimum wages and, before these could be determined and approved by the Minister, a long and slow process of consultation was statutorily imposed, which could not keep pace with any rapid changes in the cost of living. Notwithstanding these limitations, the two Acts of 1909 and 1918 were effective in eliminating the worst evils of sweated labour, and in the trades—most of them small and ill-organised—in which boards were set up the lot of the workers was substantially improved.

¹ See above pp. 34-35.

Trade Boards Acts were, it will be apparent, not well suited to deal with the emergencies that war conditions create, and in 1939 there were some hesitant proposals for amending their provisions, so that among other objects a statutory control of wages could be applied to the retail distributive trades. But the time was not propitious for what would have been a major piece of legislation, and the idea was abandoned. In the previous year, however, an Act had been passed which, although it only affected a single industry, was to become a landmark in the history of statutory wage machinery. This was the Road Haulage Act. Not only did it give the Board that it set up wider and more flexible powers—including provision for paid holidays—than a trade board possessed, but it also provided for the hearing and settling of individual grievances, a machinery which became the model on which Mr. Bevin constructed an important part of his war-time administration of wage questions. Just as under the Act of 1938 a complaint by an employee to the Minister about the unfairness of his wages had, if it seemed genuine, to be referred by the latter to the Industrial Court, so under Order 1305 an employee, or his union, could take an employer who was alleged to be paying too low wages to the National Arbitration Tribunal for an enforceable decision. It is perhaps not without significance that the war-time Minister of Labour had been earlier General Secretary of the union to which most haulage workers belonged.

The reference to him under Order 1305 of a number of disputes in retail distribution gave the Minister of Labour in the late summer of 1940 an opportunity to encourage employers and unions to set up in their different trades voluntary negotiating machinery for the regulation of wages. This suggestion bore fruit and, although discussions between the two sides were protracted, in December the food trades established the first joint council in the distributive trades. In the New Year their lead was followed by some of the other trades including hairdressing, clothing and footwear, stationery, tobacco and confectionery. With this progress achieved, the Minister turned his attention to the catering trades, in which there was virtually no existing organisation upon which to build. As early as November 1940 he proposed the setting up of a trade board, but in face of the technical difficulties in defining the multifarious categories into which catering was divided he, for the time being, dropped the idea. A year later, however, when the possibility of scheduling some of the catering trades under the Essential Work Order was being considered—which could only have been done if there were properly regulated wages and conditions of employment—he revived the project. His idea was to introduce special legislation under which permanent machinery could be set up for the regulation of catering wages. There were some doubts about the wisdom of extending the application of this legislation

beyond the period of the war, but his proposal was finally approved by the War Cabinet in the spring of 1942.

The main features of the scheme, as originally drafted, were the setting up of regional standing tribunals—similar in structure to a trade board but with the wider and more flexible rate-fixing powers that had been granted to the Road Haulage Board—together with a central tribunal to co-ordinate policy and to transmit recommendations from the regional tribunals to the Minister, who would then determine whether to embody them in an Order. When these proposals were made public, most of the employers' associations gave them a hostile reception and organised a campaign against their adoption. Why should the Minister, they asked, choose this moment to impose permanent changes upon the industry? There was no evidence that wages were exceptionally low or that workers were dissatisfied with their conditions of employment. The system the Minister was trying to foist upon the catering trades was parallel to the Fascist control of industry by means of industrial corporations and, if he got his way with catering, his next victims would be the banks, insurance companies, business offices and even domestic servants. The Minister was not greatly daunted by such extravagant tirades. He had no intention of compromising on the general principles of his plan, but he was ready to meet his critics half way on points of detailed administration. He decided, therefore, to abandon the idea of regional tribunals and to substitute a series of wages boards, which would eventually cover the different sections of the catering trades. As for the central body, its name would be changed to the Catering Wages Commission, and its authority on wages questions would be limited to making recommendations to the Minister whether or not a wages board should be established and what parts of the industry it should cover. This revised plan was incorporated in a Bill which received its second reading on 9th February 1943, when 116 members voted against it.¹ To give time for minor difficulties to be ironed out and for animosities to die down the final stages were postponed. On 10th June the Catering Wages Bill became law.² In the next month the Catering Wages Commission was constituted under the chairmanship of Mr. (later Sir) Hartley Shawcross, and in its first report in January 1944 it recommended the setting up of a wages board for industrial catering. Statutory effect was given to this recommendation in March by an Order³—the first and only Order under the Act to be made until after the end of the war.

Mr. Bevin regarded the guaranteed wage as one of the most valuable contributions of the Essential Work Order and, even before the

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 386, Col. 1196-1282.

² H. of C. Deb., Vol. 387, Col. 1777.

³ S. R. & O. 1944, No. 266.

Catering Wages Act had been passed, he was envisaging this becoming a permanent feature of industrial life. One way in which his objective might be achieved would be to give the statutory wage-fixing bodies powers, not contained in the Trade Boards Act, to recommend guaranteed wages. At a meeting with the Joint Consultative Committee in January 1944 he floated this idea, and presented for its consideration a programme in three parts. First, the Government should have greater facilities for setting up statutory wages boards and should be able to substitute them for joint industrial councils, wherever the latter showed signs of failing. Secondly, the existing trade boards, which were associated with sweated labour, should be renamed wages councils. They should be given similar powers for fixing wages and for providing paid holidays to those possessed by the Catering and Road Haulage Boards, and they should no longer be restricted as hitherto to dealing only with defined 'trades' or 'sections of trades'. Lastly, the Minister proposed that voluntary agreements reached between employers and unions should be made enforceable upon the joint application of the parties concerned. Neither side of the Committee was altogether happy about these proposals. They feared that the growth of State control over wages might jeopardise voluntary machinery, and the Trades Union Congress were at first apprehensive lest a wide extension of statutory wages enforcement might retard the growth of the trade unions. The Minister was anxious not to repeat his experience with the Catering Wages Act and, as he wanted the proposed legislation for post-war wages to be an agreed measure, he was ready to modify some parts of his original scheme. In particular, he undertook not to set up a wages council until he had received an application for its establishment from an organised trade.

The proposals were embodied in the Wages Council Act, which became law on 28th March, 1945.¹

(iii)

Conditions of Employment

Essential as it was to ensure that workers received an adequate reward for their labour, good wages would not alone promote that spirit of contentment without which full production cannot be obtained. Hardly less important, as Mr. Bevin constantly emphasised, were the conditions in which men and women would have to work and live. Earlier in this volume we have described the measures that were taken to supervise their safety and health, the arrangements for their housing, and the recreational facilities that were provided within and without the factories.² But we reserved for this chapter two other

¹ 8 & 9 Geo. 6 c. 17.

² See Chapter XXIII.

cognate subjects—hours of work and holidays—because of their direct bearing, apart from their welfare aspects, upon what, as far as labour was concerned, were the best means of ensuring a high and constant level of output. To illustrate this point—for a few critical months after the fall of France men and women were working all and every day and their efforts made production soar. But this standard could not be sustained, and a persistence with overtime began to be reflected in a positive decline in productivity. Signs of fatigue were apparent and workers began to take time off. The hours were too long; they needed a rest and a holiday. It will, therefore, be of interest to examine the attitude of the Government at different stages of the war to these two related questions—the maximum daily and weekly hours of work that should be permitted and, as a corollary, rest time and holidays.

(a) HOURS OF WORK

There were at the start of the war no common rules for determining the maximum hours for which workers might be employed. For adult men there were no State regulations, but in many industries the normal hours and the amount of overtime had been restricted by industrial agreements. For example, in the engineering industry a maximum of a 54½-hour week including overtime up to 30 hours a month had been laid down. By contrast, the hours of women and young persons were regulated by statute. Consequently, whereas in time of war when expanded production was needed men could be employed for such additional hours as they were willing to agree with their employers to work, for women and young persons steps had to be taken to relax the restrictions contained in the Factories Act of 1937. Under this Act the Home Secretary was empowered in the event of a public emergency to relax the rules where work was being carried on for the Government. The lengths to which relaxations should go and a procedure for putting them into effect without the normal preliminary investigation by the factory inspectorate had been agreed before the war began. The limits were to be 60 hours a week, and sanction could be given for women to work at night on an eight-hour shift and for boys over sixteen to be put on night work as assistants to men. The supply departments were authorised to issue instructions to their contractors for emergency hours to be worked, where necessary, within these limits, but simultaneously they had to notify the local factory inspectorate and the Home Office of the action they had taken, so that an authorising Order could in due course be made. This was a temporary expedient and before the end of 1939 statutory practice was restored—although factory inspectors were allowed to grant provisional permission for specified changes in hours pending a formal decision by the Home Office. In view of the increased number of

applications an Order was made in November 1939 covering various classes of light engineering and metal work, which empowered local factory inspectors to authorise working hours up to 57 a week; but an inspector was not obliged to allow hours up to the maximum mentioned in the Order. For young persons under sixteen, whose hours were statutorily limited to 44 a week, an Emergency Order authorised an extension up to 48. Besides allowing a certain amount of overtime Emergency Orders also provided for unusual arrangements of hours and for night working. In some cases a two-day-shift system was adopted—6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.—in others a night shift was introduced in preference to a second day shift.¹ While these statutory provisions protected women and young persons from excessive hours, the position with regard to men continued for a considerable time to be far from satisfactory. Reports from factory inspectors at the beginning of 1940 showed that in firms engaged in converting trawlers into minesweepers men were working from 70 to 90 hours a week. Elsewhere 72 hours was by no means uncommon, and there were numerous cases of a 6½ to 7-day working week.

In the crisis that followed the fall of France the provisions of the Factories Act—whose administration was now transferred to the Ministry of Labour—went temporarily by the board. 'The hours of labour are nothing compared with the struggle for life, honour and freedom', said the Prime Minister in his broadcast to the nation on 20th May; and following his lead, supply Ministers exhorted their contractors to work full time seven days a week. Some employers took it for granted that they could now disregard statutory restrictions, and in any case factory inspectors were authorised to sanction, without reference to headquarters, extended hours and work for a seventh day, as well as night work for women and young people over sixteen years of age. The response was magnificent. Men commonly worked twelve hours a day for seven days a week. Production went full steam ahead, but the pace could not be maintained.

After a few weeks the Ministry of Labour began to press for more reasonable hours for both men and women. In order to remove any doubt about the necessity for employers to obtain permission to deviate from the provisions of the Factories Act, the Production Council issued a new General Emergency Order at the end of June 1940 covering engineering, shipbuilding and the metal industries. Extended day work and day-and-night-shift working were restricted to a 60-hour week of six days (48 in the case of young persons under sixteen), and where three and two-day shifts were in operation shifts were not to exceed an average of 8 hours and were limited to six in a week. Work could, however, be authorised on a seventh day by

¹ See Cmd. 6182, Home Office Report on *Hours of Employment of Women and Young Persons in Factories during the First Five Months of the War*.

inspectors to meet an exceptional emergency. This Order was a safeguard for women and young persons, but it did not directly affect the hours for which men might be employed. The supply departments persisted in their exhortations for long hours, although it was becoming apparent that shorter hours would be in the interests of production no less than of the workers' welfare. Air raids were an additional complication, and in some factories, to allow workers to get home in good time, a short day was worked on seven days a week in preference to five long days and one short one. In June and July 1940 investigators of the Industrial Health Research Board, who visited three Royal Ordnance Factories where workers had been working ten to twelve-hour shifts seven days a week, found marked indications of fatigue. To relieve the strain they urged one day off a week, and the same advice was given to employers by the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Labour speaking in the House of Commons.¹

At the beginning of July the Minister of Labour told the Production Council that signs of industrial unrest were beginning to show themselves and asked for authority to issue a memorandum on hours of work, recommending a system of continuous three-shift working, which with a rota of relief workers would involve an average of 56½ hours for each week. Pending recruitment of sufficient labour to carry out the three-shift system, an interim arrangement allowing 60 hours a week should be permitted. The proposals were approved and were published in July 1940 in pamphlet form.² Nevertheless, the supply departments continued to make demands for extended hours, and in December the Select Committee on National Expenditure recommended that the Minister of Labour should be given powers to secure a greater uniformity.³ After this report the Minister made a more detailed investigation and found a considerable number of cases where men were working from 60 to 70 hours a week or longer. The position, too, with regard to women and young persons was still unsatisfactory. About this time, too, some misunderstanding arose following a telegram sent by Lord Beaverbrook to his contractors in the aircraft industry asking for an assurance that in future work would continue throughout Sunday. Contractors, who had insufficient labour to do this without a seven-day week, interpreted this as an instruction to disregard the orders of the Minister of Labour's pamphlet and turned a blind eye on the Factories Act and Emergency Orders. The Minister of Labour considered that it should be laid down as a general principle to be observed by all departments that factory workers should have one day off a week, or every eight days in the case of shift systems, but that these breaks might be dispensed with to meet exceptional

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 361, Col. 1358-1359.

² P/L 74/1940. *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, August 1940, p. 211.

³ *Third Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, Session 1940-1941*, para. 16.

circumstances. So far as women and young persons were concerned the statutory conditions must be observed, and any firm desiring to employ them for unauthorised hours must consult the factory inspectorate. Lord Beaverbrook protested that he had not asked that individual workers should be employed without a weekly rest, but he insisted upon his right to urge upon his contractors increases of output. Let the Ministry of Labour provide the extra labour and all would be well! When the matter was referred to the Production Executive it approved Mr. Bevin's proposal. Nevertheless, in 1942 Royal Ordnance Factories were still working excessive hours and the Select Committee castigated the Minister of Supply for his failure to set a good example.¹ Nor was the trouble confined to the two departments already mentioned; by the end of 1942 women at Admiralty establishments were still working up to 60 hours a week.

In the autumn of 1941 the trade unions complained of the strain being put on women in aircraft factories working twelve-hour shifts and asked that this should be restricted. An immediate enquiry covering 160 factories showed that in more than a half women were working 55 hours and in nearly a half from 58 to 60 hours a week, while a few were illegally employing women and young persons for over 60 hours a week. Sample investigations followed at the Hawker factories and these exposed the futility of long hours. Women were deciding for themselves how much work they could do and were limiting their hours to 47 a week. There was, in consequence, perhaps no need for concern lest women were being subjected to undue strain. The Minister of Labour was, however, convinced that, where overtime had been worked for considerable periods, women's hours should be reduced, and he supported a proposal for a five-day week of 48 with permission to go up to 52 hours. In the Royal Ordnance Factories the problem of reducing hours had been largely solved by building up their labour forces. But there seemed little prospect of finding sufficient women to work a three-shift system in aircraft firms. In any case Mr. Bevin did not favour this because of the awkward starting and finishing hours. The aircraft industry was, therefore, up against the double problem of increasing output and decreasing hours of work. During the summer of 1942 the most that could be done was to provide a few firms whose increased output was most urgent with the labour necessary to introduce a rota of rest days. Most firms, however, continued right into 1943 to work their women from 56 to 60 hours a week; and unfortunately the long hours persisted even when it seemed clear that the aircraft industry was overmanned, with the result that slackness and a high rate of absenteeism prevailed.

By the end of 1942 it was generally acknowledged that there was

¹ *Eleventh Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, Session 1941-1942*, para. 46-47.

widespread evidence of industrial strain and the Central Statistical Office was commissioned to arrange for a general enquiry into industrial efficiency. It reported that where in May 1943 women were working up to about 52 hours a week absenteeism was between 26 and 28 per cent: where the hours of work were above this level the percentage of absenteeism was 32. In the case of men the rate of absenteeism was lower but ranged from 13·7 per cent. for those working from 47 to 52 hours a week to 17·1 per cent. for those doing from 56 to 61 hours. By the autumn the supply departments seemed to have become convinced of the folly of expecting full production by continued overtime. At a meeting of the Lord President's Committee in September 1943 representatives of the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Aircraft Production expressed the opinion that 55 hours was the maximum that could be worked by women without a disproportionate amount of absenteeism. In this changed atmosphere the way seemed clear for an Order reducing the maximum working hours for women to 55 a week, but action was postponed pending the result of discussions that were going on about the employment of young persons. There was strong pressure to reduce the working hours to 48 a week for those over sixteen and to 44 for boys and girls under that age. But there were practical difficulties. In a large number of industries and services employers had been encouraged to take on juveniles as replacements for their adult workers who had been transferred to other employment, and it was strongly represented that the proposed cut in hours would have a serious effect upon output and the distribution of commodities. Finally, it was agreed that where production must be kept to a high level extensions up to 48 hours a week for young persons under sixteen and up to 52 for those over that age would be permissible, and where work was so urgent that it must be done at all costs a maximum of 55 might be allowed. These decisions about young persons gave an impetus to the voluntary reduction by managements of the hours for which women should be employed. Although the Order made in June 1940—which had put the limit at 60 hours a week—remained in force until the end of the war, from 1944 onwards in many industries the maximum working hours for women were progressively reduced to an average of between 50 to 55 a week.¹

(b) HOLIDAYS

We may now turn to the related question of holidays. During the first eight months of the war the Government had no intention of cancelling or seriously curtailing holidays in industry either by regulation or by public appeal. This policy was based on the generally accepted principle that holidays were essential for maintaining the health of workers as a means towards keeping production at the maximum level.

¹ See further P. Inman: *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, Chapter X.

Secondly, before the war the Ministry of Labour had been encouraging industries to provide holidays with pay for their workers and, as an outcome of the Holidays with Pay Act of 1938, at least eleven million workers qualified for holidays with pay—many of them for the first time in the summer of 1940. The fall of France, however, put an end to any idea of holidays as usual and the Government asked employers and workers to cancel all holidays for the time being. In order to bring the legal entitlement to holidays into line with this policy, an Order in Council was made in July 1940 enabling the period during which holidays due in 1940 could be taken to be extended to March 1941.¹ A subsequent Order made by the Minister of Labour stipulated that when the holiday was longer than three days it might be given in two spells, one of which should as far as possible immediately precede or follow the weekly rest day.²

But entitlement to holidays was not the only hindrance to the success of the Government's exhortations to defer them. Complaints were being received by supply departments that workers were becoming ill and that a short break was desirable. After consultation with the British Employers' Confederation and the Trades Union Congress the Minister of Labour recommended to the Production Council that a new statement should be issued to the effect that, while it remained the Government's view that complete stoppages of work should be avoided by arranging for holidays to be taken in rotation, a short stoppage where this was desirable in the interests of efficient production would not be regarded as contrary to general policy. The War Cabinet approved the proposals but, to guard against any impression being given to the public that the scale of production could be allowed to go down, it vetoed any publicity being given to the statement. The Minister of Labour, in consequence, prepared a confidential statement for circulation by the British Employers' Confederation and the Trades Union Congress to their members.

In December 1940 the Amulree Committee on workers' holidays—which had been set up in 1938 and had been asked after war broke out to continue its enquiries—reported that, subject to the military situation, an annual holiday of at least a week was most desirable, and towards the end of April 1941 the Labour Co-ordinating Committee agreed a statement for immediate issue approving one week's paid holiday with a public holiday on Whit Monday. Holidays, however, should be spread over the summer and autumn months and travel should be reduced to a minimum. To encourage workers to spend their holiday time at home entertainments and amusements, which were widely patronised, were provided by local authorities and voluntary bodies. Less hesitancy was shown in 1942 in giving public

¹ S. R. & O. 1940, No. 1217.

² S. R. & O. 1940, No. 1278.

and early approval to a summer holiday for workers, which it was hoped would prevent unauthorised absences from spreading. As before, there was to be only a one-day break at each Bank Holiday period except at Christmas, which happened in that year to fall on a Friday, when two days were allowed. The statement was issued towards the end of February, and a leaflet was prepared for local authorities and voluntary organisations containing suggestions on 'Making the Best of Holidays in 1942'. These arrangements were repeated in 1943 with the addition of a day off on Saturday at Bank Holiday weekends. In 1944, however, with the great burden placed on the railways in connection with the invasion of the Continent the Ministry of War Transport asked for action to be taken by the Government. To alleviate traffic at the weekends, it proposed that holidays should start in the mid-week and that the August Bank Holiday should be cancelled. These proposals were not favoured by the Minister of Labour. If a holiday ended on a Wednesday or Thursday, it was very likely that a number of workers would continue to stay away from work over the next weekend. Moreover, a mid-week start would cause difficulties with arrangements for pay and in respect of holidays with pay agreements. Furthermore, the cancellation of the August Bank Holiday would mean that between Whitsun and Christmas there would be no public holiday and this was too long without a break. In the end it was agreed to cut out Saturday at the Bank Holiday weekend and instead to give three days off at Christmas. Although there was no positive appeal to avoid travelling, workers going home for their holiday were asked to travel at the mid-week.

Owing to the many other factors involved the effect of hours of work upon output cannot be measured with any degree of accuracy, but in retrospect two conclusions suggest themselves. First, the long hours worked in June and July 1940, which in the immediate crisis produced an amazing output, were detrimental to a sustained production effort. Secondly, production results in the ensuing years indicated that there was little to be gained, and probably much to lose, when the working hours for men exceeded 60 to 65 and for women 55 to 60 a week. This was the opinion of the Industrial Health Research Board, and it was corroborated by the experience of the factory inspectorate.

APPENDIX V

The Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, 1940

STATUTORY RULES AND ORDERS 1940, NO. 1305
EMERGENCY POWERS (DEFENCE)

The Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, 1940, dated 18th July, 1940, made by the Minister of Labour and National Service under Regulation 58AA of the Defence (General) Regulations, 1939.

The Minister of Labour and National Service (hereinafter referred to as 'the Minister') with a view to preventing work being interrupted by trade disputes and by virtue of the powers conferred on him by Regulation 58AA of the Defence (General) Regulations, 1939, hereby makes the following Order:

PART I

National Arbitration

1. For the purpose of settling trade disputes which cannot otherwise be determined there shall be constituted by the Minister a tribunal to be called 'the National Arbitration Tribunal' and the provisions of the Schedule to this Order shall have effect with respect to the constitution and proceedings of the Tribunal.

2. (1) If any trade dispute exists or is apprehended that dispute, if not otherwise determined, may be reported to the Minister by or on behalf of either party to the dispute and the decision of the Minister as to whether a dispute has been so reported to him or not and as to the time at which a dispute has been so reported shall be conclusive for all purposes.

(2) The Minister shall consider any dispute so reported to him as aforesaid and, if in his opinion suitable means for settling the dispute already exist by virtue of the provisions of any agreement to which the parties are organisations representative of employers and workers respectively, he shall refer the matter for settlement in accordance with those provisions: so, however, that where a matter has been referred for settlement in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph and there is a failure to reach a settlement or, in the opinion of the Minister, a settlement is unduly delayed, the Minister may cancel the reference and substitute therefor a reference to the National Arbitration Tribunal.

(3) Where, in his opinion, no such suitable means of settlement exist as are mentioned in the last preceding paragraph of this Article, the Minister shall take any steps which seem to him expedient to promote a settlement of the dispute and may, if he thinks fit, refer the matter for settlement to the National Arbitration Tribunal.

(4) Where steps to promote a settlement of the dispute have been taken by the Minister under the provisions of paragraph (2) or paragraph (3) of this Article (otherwise than by means of a reference to the National Arbitration Tribunal) and those steps have not resulted in a prompt settlement of the dispute, the Minister shall refer the dispute for settlement to the National Arbitration Tribunal and shall do so within twenty-one days from the date on which the dispute was so reported to him as aforesaid, unless, in his opinion, the special circumstances of the case make it necessary or desirable to postpone such a reference.

(5) Any agreement, decision or award made by virtue of the foregoing provisions of this Article shall be binding on the employers and workers to whom the agreement, decision or award relates and, as from the date of such agreement, decision or award or as from such date as may be specified therein, not being earlier than the date on which the dispute to which the agreement, decision or award relates first arose, it shall be an implied term of the contract between the employers and workers to whom the agreement, decision or award relates that the rate of wages to be paid and the conditions of employment to be observed under the contract shall be in accordance with such agreement, decision or award until varied by a subsequent agreement, decision or award.

3. The Minister may refer to the National Arbitration Tribunal for advice any matter relating to or arising out of a trade dispute or trade disputes in general or trade disputes of any class or any other matter which, in his opinion, ought to be so referred.

PART II

Lock-outs and Strikes

4. An employer shall not declare or take part in a lock-out and a worker shall not take part in a strike in connection with any trade dispute, unless the dispute has been reported to the Minister in accordance with the provisions of Article 2 of this Order and twenty-one days have elapsed since the date of the report and the dispute has not during that time been referred by the Minister for settlement in accordance with the provisions of that article.

PART III

Recognised terms and conditions of employment

5. (1) Where in any trade or industry in any district there are in force terms and conditions of employment which have been settled by machinery of negotiation or arbitration to which the parties are organisations of employers and trade unions representative respectively of substantial proportions of the employers and workers engaged in that trade or industry in that district (hereinafter referred to as 'recognised terms and

conditions') all employers in that trade or industry in that district shall observe the recognised terms and conditions or such terms and conditions of employment as are not less favourable than the recognised terms and conditions.

(2) For the purposes of this Article, and subject to the provisions of paragraph (4) hereof terms and conditions of employment shall not be deemed to be less favourable than the recognised terms and conditions if they are in accordance with the terms and conditions relating to workers engaged in similar work which are applicable under:

- (a) any agreement to which the parties are organisations of employers and trade unions which are representative respectively of substantial proportions of the employers and workers engaged or employed in the trade or industry in the district in which the employer is engaged; or
- (b) any decision of a joint industrial council, conciliation board or other similar body constituted by organisations of employers and trade unions which are representative respectively of substantial proportions of the employers and workers engaged or employed in the trade or industry in the district in which the employer is engaged; or
- (c) in the absence of any such agreement or decision as is mentioned in the foregoing provisions of this paragraph, any agreement between the particular employer concerned and a trade union which is representative of a substantial proportion of workers employed in the trade or industry in which the employer is engaged; or
- (d) any award made by the National Arbitration Tribunal, the Industrial Court or any other body or person acting in the capacity of arbitrator relating to the terms and conditions of employment observable by an employer in the same trade or industry in the same district; or
- (e) any statutory provisions relating to remuneration, rates of wages, hours or working conditions, unless those provisions are themselves less favourable than the provisions of any such agreement, decision or award as is mentioned in the foregoing provisions of this paragraph, being an agreement, decision or award relating to the particular employer concerned or any employers' organisation of which he is a member or to which such an employer or such an organisation is a party.

(3) If any question arises as to the nature, scope or effect of the recognised terms and conditions in any trade or industry in any district or as to whether an employer is observing the recognised terms and conditions or is observing terms and conditions which are not less favourable than the recognised terms and conditions, that question may be reported to the Minister by any organisation of employers or any trade union which in the opinion of the Minister is an organisation or trade union that habitually takes part in the settlement of wages and working conditions in the trade or industry concerned and, if so reported, the question

shall thereupon be dealt with in the same manner as if it were a trade dispute reported to the Minister under the provisions of Article 2 of this Order and the provisions of that Article shall apply accordingly: so, however, that in making an award on any question referred by the Minister by virtue of the powers conferred by this paragraph the National Arbitration Tribunal shall have regard not only to the provisions of paragraph (2) of this Article, but also to any collective agreements concerning the terms and conditions of similar workers in comparable trades or industries.

(4) Where an award has been made by the National Arbitration Tribunal in consequence of a report made under the foregoing provisions of this Article then as from the date of the award or from such date as the Tribunal may direct, not being earlier than the date on which the question to which the award relates first arose, it shall be an implied term of the contract between the employer and workers to whom the award applies that the rate of wages to be paid and the conditions of the employment to be observed under the contract shall, until varied by a subsequent agreement, decision or award such as is mentioned in the foregoing provisions of this Article, be in accordance with the award.

(5) Any reference in the foregoing provisions of this Article to an agreement, decision or award shall be construed as a reference to that agreement, decision or award as modified by any subsequent agreement, decision or award.

PART IV

Departures from trade practices

6. Where in any industry or undertaking (or in any branch or department of an industry or undertaking) there is or has been during the period of the present emergency any departure from a trade practice, the following provisions shall have effect:

(1) Any employer or organisation directly affected by such a departure may submit to any other organisation or employer directly so affected a memorandum in duplicate signed by or on behalf of the employer or organisation submitting it containing full particulars of the trade practice concerned and the departure therefrom.

(2) The organisation or employer to whom any such memorandum is submitted shall, within ten days of the receipt thereof, either:

- (a) return one copy of it to the employer or organisation submitting it with a memorandum of approval endorsed thereon; or
- (b) furnish to such organisation or employer a counter memorandum in duplicate specifying particulars of the trade practice concerned and the departure therefrom.

(3) Where a memorandum has been submitted by an employer or organisation to another organisation or employer in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this Article:

- (a) the endorsed memorandum or the memorandum together with the counter memorandum may be deposited at a local office of the Ministry of Labour and National Service by any employer or organisation directly concerned; or
- (b) if the provisions of paragraph (2) of this Article have not been complied with, a copy of the memorandum together with a statement as to the date on which it was submitted to the other organisation or employer may be deposited at a local office of the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

(4) Where a memorandum and counter memorandum have been deposited in accordance with paragraph (3) (a) of this Article or where a copy of a memorandum has been deposited in accordance with paragraph (3) (b) thereof any duly authorised officer of the Ministry of Labour and National Service may enter any establishment to which the document in question relates and require the employer or any worker to give such information as it is in his power to give with respect to the trade practice concerned. The officer shall thereupon prepare a memorandum recording the information so obtained by him and shall deposit a copy thereof at a local office.

(5) Any employer or organisation having or claiming to have an interest in a memorandum or counter memorandum so deposited as aforesaid may at any time inspect and take copies of any such memorandum or counter memorandum.

PART V

General

7. In this Order unless the contrary intention appears the following expressions have the meanings hereby respectively assigned to them, that is to say:

‘lock-out’ means the closing of a place of employment or the suspension of work, or the refusal by an employer to continue to employ any number of persons employed by him in consequence of a dispute, done with a view to compelling those persons, or to aid another employer in compelling persons employed by him, to accept terms or conditions of or affecting employment;

‘organisation’ means an organisation representative of employers or an organisation representative of workers as the case may be;

‘period of the present emergency’ means the period beginning with the first day of September, 1939, and ending on such day as His Majesty may by Order in Council declare to be the date on which the emergency that is the occasion of the making of this Order came to an end;

‘strike’ means the cessation of work by a body of persons employed acting in combination, or a concerted refusal or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons

employed to continue to work for an employer in consequence of a dispute, done as a means of compelling their employer or any person or body of persons employed, or to aid other workmen in compelling their employer or any person or body of persons employed, to accept or not to accept terms or conditions of or affecting employment;

'trade disputes' means any dispute or difference between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen connected with the employment or non-employment, or the terms of the employment or with the conditions of labour of any person;

'trade or industry' includes the performance of its functions by a public or local authority;

'trade practice' means any rule, practice or custom in respect of the employment, non-employment, conditions of employment, hours of work or working conditions of any worker or class of worker in any establishment or class of establishment or in any trade or industry or branch of trade or industry;

'workman' means any person who has entered into or works under a contract with an employer, whether the contract be by way of manual labour, clerical work or otherwise, be expressed or implied, oral or in writing, and whether it be a contract of service or of apprenticeship or a contract personally to execute any work of labour.

8. This Order may be cited as the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, 1940, and shall come into force on the 25th day of July, 1940.

Signed by Order of the Minister of Labour and National Service this 18th day of July, 1940.

T. W. PHILLIPS

Secretary of the
Ministry of Labour and National Service.

SCHEDULE

Constitution and Proceedings of the National Arbitration Tribunal

1. The National Arbitration Tribunal shall consist of the following persons appointed by the Minister, that is to say, three appointed members, one of whom shall be chairman, and two other members, one of whom shall be chosen to represent employers and the other to represent workers.

2. Panels of persons chosen to represent employers and workers respectively shall be constituted by the Minister after consultation with the British Employers' Confederation and the Trades Union Congress respectively and the members chosen to represent employers and workers at any sitting of the Tribunal shall be selected by the Minister from those panels.

3. The appointed members of the Tribunal shall hold office for such term and on such conditions as to retirement as may be determined by the Minister.

4. The Minister shall appoint a secretary to the Tribunal and may appoint such other officers and servants as he may consider necessary.

5. The quorum necessary to constitute a sitting of the Tribunal shall consist of one appointed member, one member chosen to represent employers and one member chosen to represent workers.

6. (1) The Tribunal shall make its award or furnish its advice as the case may be without delay and where practicable within fourteen days from the date of reference.

(2) An award on any matter referred to the Tribunal for settlement may be made retrospective to such date not being earlier than the date on which the dispute or question to which the award relates first arose. The decision of the tribunal as to such date shall be conclusive.

7. Save as otherwise expressly provided in this Order, the Tribunal may regulate its procedure and proceedings as it thinks fit.

8. If any question arises as to the interpretation of any award of the Tribunal, the Minister or any party to the award may apply for a decision on such question and the Tribunal shall decide the matter after hearing the parties, or without such hearing provided the consent of the parties has first been obtained. The decision of the Tribunal shall be notified to the parties and shall be binding in the same manner as the decision in an original award.

CHAPTER XXV

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

DISPUTES arising out of the terms and conditions of employment were in peace-time largely settled by agreement between the two parties concerned without recourse to the Government. The only two Acts—the Conciliation Act of 1896 and the Industrial Courts Act of 1919—under which the Government could intervene empowered the Minister of Labour to enquire into the causes and circumstances of a dispute and to take steps to secure an amicable settlement; but it required the concurrence of both sides before the matter could be referred to arbitration for an enforceable settlement. When the Second World War broke out there was some discussion about the adequacy of these methods for dealing with the increased industrial unrest that war conditions might be expected to create, but it was decided to make no changes and to trust to the two sides of industry through their negotiating machinery to respond to the national emergency by the exercise of restraint and responsibility. This policy was justified by events. In the first eight months of the war there were no trade disputes of outstanding importance and, although a number of minor stoppages occurred, most were of short duration and affected only individual establishments. But so far, apart from the effects of the call-up, there had been no great changes in the number and distribution of industrial workers. The mobilisation of the civilian population for war had hardly begun.

(i)

Order 1305 and its Efficacy

With the advent of the new Administration in May 1940 the situation was completely altered, and the Government was given power to control and direct the manpower of the country. Recognising that an essential condition of maximum output was the maintenance of industrial peace, the new Minister of Labour, after consultation with the Joint Consultative Committee, made in July 1940, as we have already seen, the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order. The first part of this Order laid down the procedure for dealing with trade disputes. Briefly, this enjoined the Minister when there had been

a failure to reach a settlement through the existing channels of negotiation and arbitration, or where such machinery had not yet been set up, to refer the matter to the National Arbitration Tribunal. The second part of the Order prohibited a strike and lock-out in connection with a trade dispute, unless the Minister had failed within twenty-one days of having the matter reported to him to refer it for settlement to arbitration. Let us now see how effective the Order was in preventing stoppages of work and, when despite the Order strikes took place, the extent to which the offenders were prosecuted and punished.

There are two criteria by which an assessment can be made. The first is the number of disputes that were reported under the terms of the Order to the Minister and the ways in which they were handled. The second is the number of strikes that took place in the Second as compared with the First World War.

When a dispute was referred to the Minister under the Order several courses were open to him. He might refer the case back to the disputants, if he was of the opinion that they had not exhausted all the means for settlement at their disposal. Secondly, he might with the consent of the two parties refer the issue to a single arbitrator or to the Industrial Court, whose constitution was an independent chairman and two industrialists, one representing employers and the other workpeople. Thirdly, when these facilities had been already tried or were unacceptable, he was obliged to send the dispute for decision to the National Arbitration Tribunal, which consisted of a chairman, two representatives of either side of industry and three independent members appointed by the Minister.

During the war some 2,200 cases were reported to the Minister under Order 1305. About half of these were either withdrawn or settled by the parties themselves, sometimes after reference back by the Minister. The remaining disputes were sent to arbitration in the rough proportion of one-sixth to the Industrial Court or a single arbitrator and five-sixths to the National Arbitration Tribunal. These figures forcibly suggest that the fear of compulsory arbitration was an incentive to industry to make strenuous efforts to resolve its own difficulties and that, when joint negotiating machinery had been established, it proved an effective instrument of settlement. Moreover, it should be emphasised that a large number of disputes were composed under the normal procedure of conciliation provided for by the Act of 1896. Records of the Ministry of Labour show that during the war the work of their conciliation officers was very considerably extended and that with their assistance over 2,000 settlements were effected.¹

The second criterion by which the effectiveness of Order 1305 may

¹ *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946* (Cmd. 7225), pp. 277, 278 and 282.

be assessed is the number of strikes that actually took place; and here it may at first seem that it must be judged a failure. Taking the yearly average for the two periods 1939-1945 and 1914-1918 the number of stoppages was 1,527 as compared with 814—in both wars the greatest number occurring during the last year of hostilities. On the other hand, the number of workers directly or indirectly involved in stoppages of work was smaller in the Second World War—480,000 as compared with 632,000 in the earlier war. Secondly, the aggregate number of days lost was only 1,900,000 by contrast with 5,360,000 between 1914 and 1918, as most of the stoppages were of relatively short duration.¹ Moreover, it has to be remembered that far more men and women were employed in industry in the Second than in the First World War and, whereas in the years 1914-1918 they were free to offer or withhold their services, from the spring of 1940 onwards they were at the disposal of the State and could be directed to go to and remain in the particular employment where it was considered they were most required. These measures of compulsion might have been expected to increase industrial unrest, but on the contrary the yearly average of time lost through stoppages was only thirty-five per cent. of the time lost during the years 1914-18. If the chief credit for this record must go to the individual workers and to the restraint exercised by the trade unions, the provisions for compulsory arbitration contained in Part I of Order 1305 were at least a contributory cause of industrial peace.

How far Part II of the Order, which made strikes illegal, was also a deterrent to irresponsible action must remain a matter of opinion. Whatever the judgement may be, once a strike had broken out the fear of retribution did little to shorten the stoppage and, as we shall see, there were great difficulties in applying the punitive sanctions.

(ii)

General Reasons for Industrial Unrest

The reasons for a strike are rarely easy to analyse and, if it is prolonged, the original pretext tends to become merged in other discovered grievances. Between 1940 and 1945, however, more than half of the stoppages that occurred were attributable to wage disputes, while a high proportion of the remainder arose out of dissatisfaction with working arrangements, disciplinary decisions, or disputes about the types of tradesmen to be employed on particular jobs.²

There were two industries in which strikes were most prevalent—

¹ See Table 3, p. 9 and Statistical Appendix, Table XV.

² See article 'Strikes and Lockouts' printed annually in the May issues of the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* 1940 to 1945 and in the April issue of 1946.

coal-mining and engineering with its allied trades. In the former, in which there was a chronic state of unrest, the most serious stoppages occurred in the spring of 1944, in which a quarter of a million workers—predominantly in South Wales and Yorkshire—were involved and nearly one and three-quarter million working days were lost. The trouble arose from the terms of the Porter Award. By it the national minimum wage for underground and surface workers was raised to £5 and £4 10s. a week respectively, but the claim of the miners for increased piece rates had been rejected. Consequently, whereas there was a levelling up of the wages of the lower-grade workers, the higher-paid miners at the coal-face and those employed in the better-paid coal-fields derived little benefit from the award. The Government accepted the recommendation of the Tribunal that the wage structure of the industry should be reviewed but, while it was debating the question, the miners lost patience and decided on direct action to remedy their grievances. The scale of the stoppages, when preparations for the Continental invasion were in full swing, made it impossible to insist upon the normal rule of 'no negotiation under duress' and, while the strikes were still in progress, a new wages structure with substantial increases for the higher-paid miners was hastily drawn up.¹

In the engineering and kindred industries stoppages were local and were often confined to single establishments. To take a few examples—in September 1943 7,000 workers employed by Vickers-Armstrong at Barrow-in-Furness, disquieted at the possible effect on their piece rates of a recent national arbitration award for the engineering industry, and irritated at the failure of their union to reach agreement with the employers' federation on how the somewhat ambiguous terms of the award should be interpreted, took strike action, as the result of which nearly 100,000 working days were lost. A little later, 16,000 engineering operatives were idle for a month at Rolls-Royce Hillington Factory in Glasgow as a protest of disappointment at the basic rates of pay that as a result of negotiations had been allotted for some of the categories of work on which women were employed. Lastly, in August 1944 a stoppage, which went on for nearly two months and involved 2,000 Glasgow engineering operatives, began in a demand for the dismissal of an employee who was alleged not to have served a recognised apprenticeship, and subsequently developed into a claim for higher wages.

Outside the coal-mining and engineering industries the two most serious stoppages, both of which took place in 1943, were in the transport services. In May over 12,000 bus drivers and conductors in various parts of England struck in protest against the rejection by a special tribunal of their claim for increased wages, and in August 16,000

¹ See W. H. B. Court: *Coal*, pp. 261-263.

dockers at Liverpool and Birkenhead lost 55,000 working days when they ceased work in sympathy with their mates who had been suspended for refusing to work overtime.

(iii)

Particular Examples of Industrial Stoppages

We shall now supplement this outline of the causes and impacts of stoppages of work with a rather fuller description of two or three strikes selected because of their interest and importance.

(a) STRIKE OF APPRENTICES, 1941

In the early months of 1941 there was a strike for higher wages of engineering apprentices, which began on the Clyde and spread to Lancashire. Four years previously there had been similar unrest, partly because under a recent award of increased wages for journeymen no corresponding advance had been given to apprentices, and partly because the employers, who regarded the terms of an apprenticeship as a personal matter between an employer and his apprentice, refused to agree to the union's request that the subject was a matter for national negotiation. Strikes organised by a committee of apprentices broke out, and in the sequel the demands of the apprentices were substantially met. A national agreement was drawn up between the employers' federation and the unions, which provided a graded scale of wages for apprentices and set up machinery for submitting and settling subsequent claims. Despite this moral victory there was still a smouldering grievance amongst apprentices in Scotland, and in 1941 three things fanned the embers into a conflagration. First, 'dilutees' after a few months were receiving higher wages than fourth and fifth year apprentices, who were often required to set up the machines for their less-skilled and better-paid fellow workers. Secondly, employers were tending to use apprentices—so the latter alleged—as cheap labour. Lastly, although the Amalgamated Engineering Union had promised to take up the apprentices' case with the employers, months passed and nothing better emerged than an increase of from 7d. to 1s. 9d. in the apprentices' weekly wages, consequent upon an award by the National Arbitration Tribunal of a 3s. 6d. rise for adult craftsmen. It was impatience with dilatoriness and the negative results of constitutional procedure that drove the apprentices to take action on their own behalf. Their committee put in a claim for an increase of 3d. an hour for apprentices in their first four years and a wage of £2 10s., rising after six months to £3, for those in their final year. This claim was unsuccessfully presented to individual managements and then to the employers' federation, which on the basis of its agreement with the

A.E.U. refused to negotiate with the apprentices' committee. Early in March a series of stoppages occurred in the Glasgow area and spread to other towns in the West of Scotland, until there were some six thousand on strike. On 13th March a Court of Inquiry was set up by the Minister of Labour to examine the causes of the trouble. After evidence from apprentices had been taken, agreement was reached on a return to work on the basis that discussions on apprentices' wages would be immediately started and carried on until a final settlement was reached. The Court further recommended that representatives of the apprentices might be permitted to attend in a consultative capacity the meeting between the employers' federation and the union, but this not very wise suggestion was turned down by the latter. Negotiations began on 21st March and were concluded with record speed on the same day. A new scale of wages was agreed for apprentices on the basis of a percentage, according to their ages, of a journeyman's pay.

Meanwhile the Clyde apprentices had not confined their activities to Scotland. Delegates had gone to Barrow, Manchester and Rochdale and strike action had followed. The Manchester apprentices went back to work on 21st March, and those in Barrow a week later. But the Rochdale boys remained out and succeeded in bringing out again apprentices in Manchester who had gone back to work, and in inciting others who had previously remained at their jobs to join them. Between 27th March and 5th April about 6,000 were on strike. The Government took a grave view of the situation and the Minister of Labour decided that 1,100 who were of call-up age should be issued with notices to report for medical examination. The union was doubtful of the wisdom of this move, but in fact it served its purpose. By 12th April all the apprentices had returned to work. There can be little doubt that this strike which originated in dissatisfaction with wages could have been, if not averted, at any rate restricted in time and locality, if the urgency of reaching a settlement had been recognised by the proper negotiating bodies—the employers' federation and the A.E.U.

(b) BETTESHANGER, 1942

Our second example comes from Betteshanger, a colliery in Kent. Here the miners were paid so much for every ton of coal they got, but because of the undulating nature of the seam they were, by an agreement made in 1933, given supplementary allowances to offset loss of earnings where the working conditions were abnormally difficult. In November 1941 two coal-faces proved exceptionally hard to work and the local union officials negotiated with the management special allowances, which, however, were not accepted by the sixty men concerned. Instead they started a go-slow movement and, when they persisted in this course, the management at the beginning of December ordered

them out of the pit. Miners from other faces then came out in sympathy and it looked as if there would be a complete stoppage of the 1,620 employed at the colliery. Officials of the Mines Department visited the pit and it was agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration. The award of the arbitrator, Sir Charles Doughty, was in effect a vindication of the action of the management and a condemnation of the workers. In his opinion there was no reason why with goodwill miners at the two faces concerned could not produce four tons per man-shift, whereas during the go-slow period their output had been little over a single ton; and he made no change in the allowances which seemed to him, if anything, on the generous side. After the award work was resumed but, whereas the men on one of the two faces worked normally, those on Number 2 face continued the go-slow policy. For the short period up to the end of the calendar year the management paid them a daily wage of 15s. 3d. a shift, but gave notice that from the first pay day in the new year wages would be based upon tonnage output together with the allowances recommended by the arbitrator. The local branch of the union replied with an ultimatum that, unless the wages of the men concerned were made up to 15s. 3d. per day-shift, they would call out all their members. This was rejected by the management and on 9th January all work stopped at the pit.

After abortive attempts by officials of the Mines Department to get work restarted, the Minister of Labour agreed that there was no practical alternative to prosecution. As the Mines Department found it impossible to select individuals, summonses were taken out against all the underground workers in the pits—1,050 in all. The cases were heard at Canterbury on 23rd January and the Bench decided that the chairman, the secretary and a committee member of the local branch of the union were responsible for bringing the men out on strike, and they sentenced the chairman to two months' and the others to one month's imprisonment. The men who had been working on Number 2 face were each fined £3 and were given two months in which to pay and in default one month's imprisonment, while the rest were fined £1 with the same time in which to pay and in default 14 days in gaol. After the trial was over the management offered the men the arbitrated conditions of employment, which were unanimously rejected; but on 28th January a basis was discovered for a resumption of work. The management agreed to make an *ex gratia* payment which would make up the earnings of the Number 2 face workers for the two weeks in dispute to 15s. 3d. a shift, while the workers undertook to make reasonable efforts to produce a proper output of coal.

At the beginning of February the Home Secretary, who had received many representations about the sentences of imprisonment imposed on the three officials, decided, in view of the settlement of the dispute and after consultation with the Justices, to recommend the remission of

the remainder of the sentences. The three officials were accordingly released from prison, but it was decided not to remit the fines imposed upon the miners. This led to difficulties. By May 1942 only nine of the convicted men had paid their fines and warrants for the arrest of the remainder were in the hands of the police. But the Justices were reluctant to order their arrest. There was not enough prison accommodation for over a thousand men; there were too few police to handle the job; and in all probability arrests would cause another strike. The Ministry of Labour on being consulted suggested that, instead of cancelling the fines, the warrants for the arrest of the defaulters should be held in abeyance, and this advice was conveyed by the Home Office to the Justices, who accepted it. So the sorry story ended in a moral victory for the men, who had got substantially what they went on strike to obtain. But, if their action was reprehensible, the management, as the Ministry of Labour officers confirmed, was also at fault in its failure to establish good relations with its workers. What was more serious was the exposure of the weakness of Order 1305 as an instrument for the prohibition of strikes, because the sanctions it provided could not be enforced. To this we shall return.

(c) STRIKE OF BOILERMAKERS, 1944

The interest of the third strike in our selection is that, although a wage issue developed in the course of its three months' duration, the underlying cause was a dispute over the labour that should be used for operating a new machine. This was an American flame planing machine, which had been introduced by Vickers-Armstrong into their Tyneside Naval yard, and subsequently by shipbuilding firms on the Clyde. After failure to reach a settlement locally the issue was debated at a central conference in August 1944, at which both sides of the industry were represented. The Boilermakers' Society claimed that the machine should be manned by their members, on the grounds that it belonged to the category of 'burning tools' which called for a boilermaker's skill, and that it was a recognised practice that, when a new process was introduced, men who in consequence had lost their previous job were entitled to be employed upon it. To this the employers replied that the operation of the new plant was akin to that of ordinary planing machines and could be satisfactorily carried out by semi-skilled workers and, secondly, that in view of the character of the new work they could not accept the argument that it should be reserved for skilled men just because the processes on which they had previously been employed were now superseded. The conference broke up without reaching an agreement and the boilermakers' spokesman said that they would use all legitimate means to establish their claim. After the meeting the Clyde shipbuilders pursued a cautious policy

and, when the new machines were in use, employed members of the Boilermakers' Society on them. On Tyneside, on the other hand, the shop stewards informed the firm that members of the Boilermakers' Society would refuse to work on any material processed by gas burning, unless one of their members had operated the machine. Matters came to a head in October when the shop stewards gave notice that the boilermakers had unanimously decided to stop piece work and to work only on a time basis, because a burning machine was being operated by a semi-skilled man not belonging to their union. The firm rejected this notice and informed the shop stewards that refusal to work on the ordinary terms would in their judgement constitute a strike. From the middle of the month the men involved reported daily for work at time rates and were sent away. Nine days later, with a view to ending the deadlock, the Boilermakers' Executive suggested that without prejudice to future discussions the firm should place a boiler-maker on the machine. The latter turned down this proposal, and on 30th October the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation reported the dispute to the Minister of Labour.

After some abortive attempts to bring the two sides together, the Minister on 29th November appointed a Court of Inquiry to investigate the circumstances of the dispute and to report on arrangements for manning the machines during the period of the war. On the same day the First Lord of the Admiralty sent identical messages to both the Employers' Federation and the Boilermakers' Society that the urgency of the naval construction work was such that the Government would no longer permit it to be held up. Work must, therefore, be resumed but, in order that neither side should be prejudiced during the inquiry, the operation of the flame planing machine should be immediately suspended. The employers complied with this request, but work was not restarted on the following day because the men would only resume on time rates and conditions. After a telegram from the Minister of Labour expressing regret that the boilermakers had disregarded the First Lord's message, the executive passed a resolution declaring the dispute at an end and ordering a resumption of work. But the strikers still refused to go back except on a time basis, and the Minister asked the Court of Inquiry for an immediate report on this additional item in its terms of reference. On 14th December the Court reported that the men had no justification for refusing to resume work on the terms and conditions existing before the dispute. The Admiralty now emphasised that work on transport ferries must have exceptional preference, and a telegram was sent on 18th December to each of the 136 men who had been employed on the work informing them that they were expected to report at the yard two days later. On the same day that the telegram was despatched the interim report was explained to a mass meeting of men by their union delegate, but they decided to

continue their refusal to work except on a time basis. On 20th December the 136 men to whom the telegrams had been sent arrived at the Naval yard and offered their services at time rates. The next day summonses were taken out against them. The proceedings opened at the Newcastle Police Court when some 4,500 Tyneside members of the Boilermakers' Society struck in sympathy and congregated outside the Court. On an application by the defence for an adjournment the case was deferred until 5th January when the sympathetic strike was not repeated. During the course of the proceedings it became clear that the verdict was likely to go in favour of the prosecution, and the solicitor for the defence was advised by the prosecution to try and get his clients to go back to work because, if they did so, only a nominal fine might be imposed. After a meeting with the men in Court, the outcome of which he did not disclose, the solicitor asked the Magistrates to defer their decision until the next day when a mass meeting of all strikers would have been held. The Magistrates, however, announced immediately that they had found the men guilty, but agreed to defer imposing the penalties until the next day. At the resumed hearing Counsel for the Defence reported that the men had decided to continue on strike and that he had been instructed to add that any fines or costs would not be paid. The Bench then imposed a fine of £10 and 10s. costs or in default thirty-one days imprisonment on each defendant, and notice of appeal was given.

Immediately after the trial the convicted men were issued with directions to attend for interview on 9th January at the Newcastle Employment Exchange, where they were given orders to resume work two days later without leave to appeal. The remaining strikers—246 in number—who had been identified as employed on vital naval construction were sent letters informing them that they were expected to resume work on 11th January on the terms on which they had been employed before the stoppage began. The chief official of the Boilermakers' Society tried on 9th January to get the men to comply with the orders given to them, but no agreement was reached. Two days later the strikers were called to a mass meeting by their solicitor's assistant who explained to them the legal implications of the Magistrates' decision. After the meeting he informed the press that the men had accepted his advice. It seems clear that the men had known that this meeting would take place and had preferred that the credit for their return to work should belong to their solicitor and not to their union. This suggests that the chief cause of the prolonged stoppage was a mistrust of the union which the shop stewards had sown in the minds of its members.

On 17th January 1945 there was a full resumption of work at piece rates. The appeal was dismissed and the fines were paid.

(d) STRIKE AGAINST THE COAL-MINING BALLOT SCHEME, 1944

The last strike we have chosen to describe was different from the other three. It was not an industrial dispute, but an attempt to coerce the Government to change its policy. The occasion was the introduction in January 1944 of the ballot scheme for the mines, which was to be applied generally to all men liable to be called up for the Forces. Apart from those accepted for flying duties or as artificers in submarines, the only others to be exempted were men in a short list of highly skilled occupations who were only called up in their Service trades.¹ The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions was much concerned at the proposed inclusion of shipbuilding apprentices in the ballot, but was reassured when it was explained by the Minister of Labour that this would not affect the current arrangements by which apprentices were granted deferment until they had completed their training or reached the age of 20. But the apprentices were not placated. Protest meetings against the direction of young men to the mines were held, and in mid-January the self-appointed Tyneside Apprentices' Guild issued an appeal to their fellow workers in other parts of the country to fight the ballot scheme.

Serious trouble began in March when three Tyneside apprentices were directed to coal-mining, and the prosecution of one of them who had failed to report at the Training Centre was being considered. The Tyneside Guild sent a letter to the Minister of Labour accusing him of a breach of faith to the apprentices, and demanding immediate legislation within the next three weeks to guarantee the unconditional exemption of all apprentices from liability to direction under the ballot scheme—failing which the apprentices would withhold their labour. The Minister, who had evidence that members of the Trotskyist Movement, which on the entry of Russia into the war had broken away from the Communist Party, were attempting to exploit the unrest among the apprentices for their own political ends, issued instructions that any apprentice who came out on strike was to be immediately summoned for medical examination and, if found fit, called up to the Army. True to their threat 6,000 Tyneside apprentices stopped work on 28th March and were joined next day by 4,800 on the Clyde and 1,000 at Huddersfield. The Minister issued a statement to the Press stigmatising the strike as a political move of a few irresponsible mischief makers to coerce the Government at a critical moment of the war, together with an explanatory leaflet which set out clearly the position of the apprentices in relation to call-up for the Forces or the mines. During the next few days the strike spread, but the response was not wholehearted. The unions, which had condemned the strike, were doing all that they could to break the power of the unofficial

¹ See above pp. 252-255.

apprentices' guild and to induce more apprentices to join their appropriate union. There was a stormy meeting of the strikers on 2nd April, at which the Tyneside apprentices reaffirmed their intention to stay out and sent a deputation of delegates from the Clyde, Tyneside and Huddersfield to London—which the Minister of Labour refused to receive. In his subsequent report to the War Cabinet the Minister emphasised his belief that the strike was the work of a few ringleaders and, as the existing emergency powers did not enable him to take effective measures against them, the Director of Public Prosecutions was considering taking action under the Trade Disputes Act. Meanwhile the trade unions were doing their best to get a resumption of work, and notices to attend for medical examination had been issued to the strikers. For one reason or another the apprentices now began to break away from the Tyneside Guild and to drift back to work, until the leaders lost heart and agreed to a general resumption after the Easter holiday. By 12th April the strike was over.

The Director of Public Prosecutions now decided to prosecute four members of the Trotskyist Movement—three men and one woman—under the Trade Disputes Act. They were charged with conspiring to act in furtherance of an illegal strike and of aiding and abetting a named apprentice in this course. To this was later added a further count of conspiring to incite persons, including apprentices, to declare an illegal strike. When the trial concluded on 19th June the defendants were found guilty of acts in furtherance of a strike, but not guilty of inciting apprentices to strike. The men received sentences of imprisonment from six to twelve months and the woman of thirteen days—which meant her immediate release. The defendants decided to appeal and, when the arguments had been heard, the Judge quashed the sentences on the ground that, as the strike had not begun till 28th March, only acts subsequent to that date were relevant to the charge of furthering the strike, whereas the jury had been invited to consider evidence that related to events prior to 28th March.

In the foregoing account of a few major strikes we have seen the varying efficacy of the attempts that were made to bring home to those who took part in them the illegality of their actions. We must now examine a little more closely the attitude of the Minister of Labour towards prosecutions for contraventions of Part II of Order 1305.

(iv)

Prosecutions under Order 1305

From his general reluctance to resort to compulsion until persuasion had been fully tried, it was to be expected that Mr. Bevin would pin his faith to the deterring effects on the minds of workpeople of the

declared illegality of strikes, and would not wish to use the penal sanctions of the Order so long as the desired results could be achieved through the normal disciplinary machinery of industry. Such in fact was the policy that he set out to pursue. Legal proceedings under the Order were to be taken only where he could count upon the support of those elements among the workpeople that had a respect for constitutional procedure, and where he was satisfied that the purposes of the strikers were mischievous. In coming to this decision the Minister, apart from his personal inclinations, was no doubt also aware that the contrary course would expose the weakness of the Order as an instrument for implementing the doctrine it enunciated. Its impotency would soon become apparent, if any considerable numbers chose to defy it. It would be impossible to send large numbers on conviction to prison, and it would be undesirable to make martyrs of a few by singling them out for disciplinary action.

During the first six months or so of the life of the Order no prosecutions were initiated, and those employers who pressed the Minister to take action were informed that they must first make full use of the joint negotiating machinery at their disposal and give the unions the maximum opportunity to maintain discipline. By March 1941, however, the Minister realised that the time was at hand when the penal provisions of the Order would have to be put into play. Many stoppages—although of short duration and involving small numbers—were occurring, and in some cases there appeared to be a deliberate avoidance of proper constitutional action to deal with the causes. The first convictions under the Order were recorded at Manchester on 8th April 1941, when six of the engineering apprentices who had been the ringleaders in the Lancashire strike were bound over for twelve months on the sum of £5 each.¹ In Scotland there were more than twice as many stoppages as in England and Wales, many of them in the shipbuilding yards, and in August the Lord Advocate, who was responsible for instituting legal proceedings, decided to move. At the Caledon Shipyard at Dundee there had been no fewer than fifteen sectional stoppages since May and, when the drillers stopped work for ten days, summonses were served on the sixty-two men concerned. Some other classes of workers were also either on strike or threatening to come out, and it was problematical what would be the effect on them of the action taken against the drillers. The outcome was, however, satisfactory and all the strikers including the drillers returned to work. In these circumstances the Lord Advocate was reluctant to continue the proceedings, and it was decided that the drillers would be required to appear in Court, but that an application would be made for a month's adjournment of the case. In the intervening period the

¹ See above p. 460.

men worked well, and at the resumed hearing of the case the Sheriff bound them over.

The first large scale prosecution took place in January 1942 when over 1,000 miners on strike at Betteshanger Colliery in Kent were summonsed. The outcome of the trial, which has already been described, was not unnaturally most disturbing and, to avoid the possibility of another débacle, the Minister declined in the course of the two following months to proceed against eight committee men who had brought out 1,400 railwaymen, or against miners who were on strike in a Durham coalfield. By May, however, he was in a less cautious mood. 158 Tyneside dockers had stopped work on a wages issue, without waiting for their claim to be considered under the established procedure. The men in question, who had been on strike a few weeks earlier and had escaped punishment—through slowness on the part of the Ministry in instituting action and the subsequent withdrawal of the charges—no doubt expected that they could again count on a similar immunity. This time, however, the Ministry acted with a speed that impressed both the unions and the culprits. The Bench imposed fines of £5 to be paid within twenty-eight days and in default thirty days imprisonment. The men refused either to pay or to work; but the efforts of union officials were successful in inducing them, together with 150 other dockers who had come out on strike in protest against the use of troops to discharge the cargo upon which the 158 men had been employed, to go back to work. The Minister was not, however, satisfied that the prevalent unrest in the Tyneside docks was entirely the men's fault and he set up a Court of Inquiry. In their report the investigators attributed much of the trouble to the mismanagement of the men by a responsible trade union official, and the Minister was assured by the union that a change would be immediately made. Meanwhile the convicted dockers were working satisfactorily, and in the end no action was taken to enforce the fines.

Although after the Betteshanger trial there were no further sentences of imprisonment, there was a lack of uniformity in the decisions reached by the local Benches on comparable charges. Whereas some magistrates were ready to adjourn a case to give an opportunity for a settlement of the dispute and for the return of the men to work, others imposed fines that at times seemed out of proportion to the gravity of the offences. To take an example—in May 1943 a small number of sheet metal workers, who had been earning exceptionally high wages at another factory in the town, were transferred to the Coventry Radiation Company. Dissatisfied at their monetary losses they prevailed upon the old hands in the firm to join in a strike for a fifty per cent. increase in piece rates. Ninety-one men in all came out and the stoppage lasted seven days. When proceedings were taken against them, the men pleaded guilty and expressed regret for their headstrong

action. Nevertheless, the Bench fined each of them £25. On appeal the fines were substantially reduced in forty-one cases, but in the remainder the Recorder, as he could find no special hardship conditions, dismissed the appeals with costs. A substantial part of the fines were eventually paid by the men's union. By contrast, some magistrates were prepared to take a lenient view, when the strikers had gone back to work before the proceedings against them started, and when by one means or another it was intimated that the Minister would welcome clemency. For example, owing to a misunderstanding of what they believed to be the instructions of their local union officials miners at a Lancashire pit had failed to present themselves for Sunday work. This created administrative difficulties and on the following day work could not be found for some of the men who reported. The consequence was a complete stoppage, and the Minister of Labour agreed to prosecute. After the issue of the summonses the men realised their mistake and through their representative expressed their regret and gave an assurance that they would not again act in contravention of the National Arbitration Order. The Bench accordingly dismissed the cases.

In 1944 there were only three prosecutions in England and Wales under the Order, and in two of them the Ministry lost the verdict. The strikers were in each case defended by an astute solicitor, who succeeded in convincing the magistrates that the stoppages were not strikes but lock-outs. The last trial—which we have already described—was in January 1945, when 127 boilermakers who had been on strike for three months were prosecuted and fined.¹

In Scotland there were in all twice as many prosecutions under the Order as in England and Wales; but fewer individuals were involved. Only in 6 cases out of 71 did the number of men against whom proceedings were taken exceed 100, as compared with 14 cases out of 38 in England and Wales. Nearly half the prosecutions arose out of stoppages in the coal-fields, which, if trivial in cause, were persistent in frequency. By 1944, indeed, strikes were so prevalent and so many miners were involved that the Lord Advocate virtually gave up prosecuting. This decision clearly illustrates the weakness of the sanctions in the Order. Where large numbers decided to take the law into their own hands, they could be fairly confident that no punitive measures could be effectively taken against them. On the other hand, where the number of strikers was relatively small and prompt action was taken, an appearance in Court had at times salutary corrective consequences. Nevertheless, it may be felt that it would have been better policy to have kept the punitive sanctions in cold storage and to have relied upon the declaration of the illegality of strikes as a deterrent to stoppages of

¹ See above pp. 462-464.

work. Against this it might fairly be argued that it would have been a confession of weakness to have made an Order and to have declined to enforce its provisions. This leads us back to the question, to which we have already alluded, whether Part II of the Order was a wise measure. Would it not have been better to have trusted to the restraining influence of the unions, fortified by provisions for voluntary and compulsory arbitration, as a means of checking irresponsible action? If to this it is objected that the chief cause of strikes in 1943 and 1944 was the rejection of the authority of the unions by some of their hot-headed members, it may be fairly replied that in the course of a long war workers were bound to become restless and get out of hand, but that it may well be doubted whether the number of stoppages would have been appreciably greater, if the Minister of Labour in the crisis of 1940 had not decided to declare strikes illegal.

In the autumn of 1943 the Minister was firmly of the opinion that the chief cause of the strikes that were becoming numerous in the engineering and coal-mining industries was political rather than industrial. He believed that workers were being incited and instigated to stop work by subversive elements, both within and without industry, bent on using the strike weapon to further their own mischievous ends.¹ The part that the Trotskyists played in the apprentices' strike against the mining ballot strengthened his conviction, and he was prepared to believe that the big stoppage in the Yorkshire coal-fields in the early months of 1944 might well be attributable to outside influences. He accordingly decided to ask for powers to deal with the situation and, after consultation with representatives of employers and workers, he obtained the agreement of his Ministerial colleagues. A new Defence Regulation, 1AA, was made by Order in Council on 17th April 1944.² This made it an indictable offence to 'instigate or incite any other person to take part in, or otherwise act in furtherance of, any stoppage among persons engaged in the performance of essential services'. The penalties it prescribed were very severe. On conviction a person was liable to a maximum of five years' penal servitude or a fine of £500 or both. At the same time Defence Regulation 1A—which prohibited acts calculated to prevent or interfere with persons carrying on essential services—was amended so as to make peaceful picketing illegal.

No proceedings were instituted under the new Regulation, and this need occasion no great surprise. While it might have been possible to identify persons for prosecution, it would certainly have been very difficult to produce evidence upon which their guilt could have been established in Court. Moreover, enquiries into the activities of militant bodies showed that their tactics were to wait until a stoppage had

¹ H. of C. Deb., Vol. 392, Col. 666, 24th September 1943.

² S. R. & O. 1944, No. 461.

occurred and then to encourage the strikers to stay out. There was little to suggest that they were directly instigating or inciting workers to begin a strike. It was understandable that the Minister of Labour should have been disturbed at this critical stage of the war by the increasing number of stoppages in industry; but, with what amounted to an obsession that the true explanation was political, he would seem to have underestimated the unsettling influence of war weariness and the irrational discontent with working conditions that it can so easily engender. As it was, the new Regulation was harmless—it may even have acted as a deterrent to militant agitators—but on the necessity for it there may still be, as there was at the time of its enactment, room for disagreement.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ACHIEVEMENT IN RETROSPECT

THE STORY of how the British people were mobilised and deployed for war has now been told. We have seen that as late as the Munich crisis the country was unprepared to meet aggression. Plans based on the experience of the 1914-1918 war had been drawn up, but with an obstinate belief in the continuance of peace the Government had been reluctant to give orders for their execution. In the early days of the war, partly because of the passivity of the enemy and partly because of a lack of leadership and a failure to recognise the magnitude of the task that lay ahead, the transformation of the economy of the country from a peace to a war-footing proceeded at a leisurely and unimaginative pace. The Armed Forces, it is true, were progressively strengthened by call-up under the National Service Acts, but there was little attempt to visualise and anticipate the manpower implications of an expanding programme of munitions. The fall of France put an end to dreams of an early peace and awakened the country to the dangers that threatened its continued existence. A new Government came into office and immediately took powers to control the human resources of the country and to direct men and women to perform such duties and services as might be required of them. This was the real beginning of the mobilisation of the country for war which, in three and a half years, was to reach its consummation. It was a gigantic task, and the road was beset with problems that often arose with unforeseeable suddenness or urgency. The situation was never static. Manpower policy had frequently to be revised to meet changes in the strategic plans and, as the demands of the war programme grew in volume and intensity, so measures of increasing austerity had to be imposed upon the civilian population. There was little opportunity for sustained thought and deliberation; decisions had to be rapidly improvised and courageously taken. In such a relentless tempo mistakes were inevitable and, although it is easy to be wise after the event, we shall end this administrative study with a few reflections on some lessons that may be learnt from the account which we have given.

In the sphere of manpower planning the high degree of efficiency with which supply and demand were assessed from 1942 onwards was

in notable contrast with the rudimentary and haphazard estimates of the first two years of the war. To some extent the experimental nature of early manpower budgeting was inevitable; the course that the war would take could not have been forecast with any degree of assurance. But the main reason was that planners were working in the dark. Although before the outbreak of war the strength to which it was thought the Armed Forces would have to be built up had been provisionally determined, no reliable assessment had been made of the quantity and types of arms and munitions that would be required, nor of the labour that would be necessary to produce them. Moreover, there was insufficient information available in the Ministry of Labour about the distribution of the working population, while of the jobs that could only be done by skilled workers there was little reliable knowledge. This was the legacy of the indecision and procrastination that bedevilled the Government of this country from the advent of Hitler to power, and there can be little doubt that if, while peace lasted, the manpower resources of the country had been investigated and classified, some of the early confusion and uncertainty in the development of the production programme could have been averted. This criticism gains force when we contrast the careful plans that had been made in peace-time for the call-up to the Armed Forces. A Schedule of Reserved Occupations had been prepared in which the occupations from which men of specified ages should not be withdrawn were listed. This was one of the most effective instruments that the Ministry of Labour devised. Not only did it prevent a repetition of the disastrous consequences of uncontrolled enlistment in 1914, but because it was flexible and kept under constant revision it could be manipulated to regulate the number of able-bodied men of military age that should be called up or retained in their skilled occupations in civilian life.

Although as the war went on the technique of manpower budgeting progressively improved, the data on which estimates of supply and demand were made were, to a greater extent than was sometimes recognised, of a tentative nature. This was mainly due to two reasons. First, supply departments and their contractors tended as a piece of deliberate policy to pitch their requirements high, with the understandable intention that production should not be held up by insufficiency of labour. Secondly, the forecasts that the Ministry of Labour made of the supply of workers that might become available for munitions were bound to be speculative, because it was not simply a question of making global estimates but of assessing from a given pool the numbers that might be found suitable for transfer. Within these limitations, however, the manpower budgets had this definite value that they enabled the War Cabinet to get a general picture of the manpower situation and to decide on where curtailments would have to be made

in a programme which the dwindling sources of supply made it impossible to carry out in its entirety.

The task of the Ministry of Labour in endeavouring to find the workers required for the production programme was made additionally difficult by the haphazard methods by which the munitions industries were expanded and contracts were placed. It was understandable that supply departments should prefer to deal with employers of whose efficiency they had experience, but there was a tendency for new factories to be built or extensions to existing firms approved with far too little regard for the possibility of finding locally the productive labour they would require. The result was that some factories were sited in remote districts or in areas already congested and workers had to be imported from other parts of the country. If from the beginning more attention had been given to the manpower aspects of production, the scale on which it was subsequently found necessary to transfer workers, with all the headaches it involved, might have been significantly reduced. The situation was further complicated by the competing demands of the three supply departments, which not infrequently chose the same areas and sometimes the same firms for the allocation of their contracts. It may be thought that a more coherent policy might have emerged if, as was advocated by the manpower planners in pre-war years, a single Ministry of Supply had been set up at the outset of the war. If against this it is urged that the specific requirements of the three Services called for the separate attention of individual Ministers, the worst effects of this divided responsibility might still have been avoided, if from the beginning a co-ordinating Minister had been appointed and if he had been vested with greater authority and powers than were in fact given to the Minister of Production in 1942.

Three supply departments, each pressing its claims for labour, undoubtedly increased the difficulties of the Ministry of Labour, faced as it was with the continuous problem of how to find and distribute the diminishing manpower resources to the best national advantage. Not only did the demands in aggregate exceed the available supply of workers, but serious controversies arose over the basis on which they were computed. Broadly the difference of approach was this. The supply departments maintained that as a reasonable insurance they must, in stating their requirements, make allowances for developments in production that would entail more labour than they were in the meantime able to absorb. The Ministry of Labour on the other hand held the view that contracting firms, on whose forecasts the supply departments relied, constantly over-stated their requirements and, as labour supply inspectors frequently confirmed, asked for numbers which were in excess of what they could use or which, by internal re-organisation, could be substantially reduced. Long discussions were often necessary

before a realistic compromise was reached, and it may be thought that the will was not always present to try and understand each other's difficulties. The situation was somewhat eased by a decision of the Lord President's Committee in 1942 to give each supply department—on the model of what had been done for the Army—a global allocation of labour within which it must plan its output. From the Ministry of Labour's point of view this had the advantage of setting a limit to the total amount of labour it could be called upon to provide for each supply department, but it still left the persistent problem of how to make workers available in the places where they were wanted. It was not just a matter of detailing batches of workers to go to particular firms. Workers, the Ministry of Labour insisted, must not be treated as mere units of production; before they were withdrawn and transferred to other employment their suitability for the new work, no less than their personal and domestic responsibilities, must be taken into account.

This cautious approach to the transference of labour had at the time its vigorous critics, and may today still be questioned. If, it is argued, Mr. Bevin had been more ready to make a wider use of the powers of direction which he had been given in May 1940 and if he had been less fussy about the welfare of the individual worker, then essential production would have got more of the labour it required in a shorter space of time. But the conclusion drawn from the premises in this hypothetical proposition stops short at a vital point. To whatever extent firms might have received more workers, the level of production would not have been increased or even maintained unless the new arrivals had been prepared to stay and settle down contentedly in their jobs. Was it not essential to ensure that the remuneration that was being paid was equitable, that housing accommodation and food were adequate, and that something was done to compensate the workers for the loss of the social amenities to which they were accustomed in their home surroundings? These were the conditions which Mr. Bevin insisted should be, in large measure at any rate, fulfilled before he would agree to the issue of directions. The rightness of this decision would seem to be confirmed by the results. Of the large numbers that entered employment for the first time or were sent to distant parts of the country, the great majority applied themselves with enthusiasm to learning and doing the jobs they were given. Until the last year of the war, when weariness began to tell, there were relatively few industrial stoppages of serious dimensions, whether from dissatisfaction with wages or a general feeling of restlessness. If, on the other hand, the Minister had followed the advice of his critics, it may be that for a short time the workers, in the spirit which the war engendered, would have put up with hard conditions and discomforts but it can hardly be doubted that before long, even if they could not obtain permission to

leave their employment, there would have been a sharp decline in the energy they put into their work and a consequential drop in production.

Mr. Bevin's attitude towards the issue of directions exemplifies the philosophy upon which his manpower policy was built. As far as possible the principle of voluntarism was to be preserved within a framework in which the value of compulsory powers lay primarily in the indirect pressure they could be counted upon to exercise. Workers were to be encouraged and persuaded to do what was required of them because much better results would be achieved if they could feel that, although they might have been compelled, they had of their own free will agreed to accept the employment offered to them. For the execution of this policy the Minister inculcated in his local officers the need to treat each worker as a human being and to be prepared at interviews to give time and trouble to create a relationship of mutual confidence. Moreover, the Minister was a strong believer in the advantages of conferences as a medium for explaining to those who would be most affected the reasons for the measures that he was obliged to introduce and what they would entail. Thus, for example, in 1940 he invited the views of the Joint Consultative Committee of employers and workers upon the best methods of avoiding industrial disturbances, and he regularly used the Women's Consultative Committee as a forum for the discussion of matters relating to women's employment. Similarly, when it was proposed to withdraw large numbers of workers from a particular industry employment exchange managers were encouraged to invite in advance the co-operation of the employers' association and workers' union most closely concerned.

It may perhaps be contended that these methods tended to slow down the machine for the distribution of labour. It may also be claimed, with some justice, that Mr. Bevin was sometimes unnecessarily hesitant in introducing measures which he recognised would sooner or later be required. For example, public opinion was ready, it may be thought, to accept the necessity for the conscription of women some months before the Bill was introduced into Parliament, and the Control of Engagement Order for women might with advantage have been made a year or so earlier than it was. But, although there is substance in these criticisms, there is another and better criterion by which both the direction of policy and its timing may be judged. In retrospect the most impressive feature of the progressive mobilisation of the country was the willingness of men and women to co-operate with the Government. Much of this was no doubt due to patriotic motives, but it is also surely true that the response would not have been so widespread unless the people had recognised that what they were being required to do was in the circumstances fair and reasonable; that shirkers would not be allowed to escape their obligations;

and that the tasks which had to be performed were allocated without distinction of class or respect of persons. This was the strength and vindication of Mr. Bevin's policy.

It was at the local offices that the general public was brought into the closest contact with the Ministry of Labour. It was here that men and women registered, were interviewed and told of the duties which they would be required to perform. The local offices were thus the testing ground of manpower policy. At times, as might be expected, complaints were made about the alleged dictatorial bearing of local officers, but in relation to the vast numbers with every variety of temperament that passed through the employment exchanges the grievances were inconsiderable. The general impression was that workers were handled with discretion, sympathy and courtesy. Time has not impaired this contemporary judgement. The patient firmness with which the thousands of local officers, many of whom had come from outside the Civil Service, carried out their unceasing and onerous duties goes far to explain how the mobilisation of the country was successfully achieved.

Statistical Appendix

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

TABLE I

*Distribution of Manpower in Great Britain**
At June in each year

A. MALES AGED 14-64

Thousands

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Total working population	14,656	15,104	15,222	15,141	15,032	14,901	14,881
Armed Forces	480	2,218	3,278	3,784	4,300	4,500	4,653
Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Police	80	292	324	304	253	225	112
Total in industry	13,083	12,160	11,520	10,992	10,422	10,122	10,021
Agriculture and fishing	884	848	883	869	879	878	883
Mining and quarrying	868	880	811	811	804	799	785
Metal industries†	2,379	2,628	2,862	2,989	3,025	2,916	2,643
Chemical industries‡	221	257	278	296	280	264	248
Textiles	401	395	314	260	233	221	222
Clothing, boots and shoes	246	223	187	155	136	129	136
Food, drink and tobacco	391	354	320	297	274	269	276
Other manufactures|| . . . . .	917	741	635	555	496	483	498
Transport and shipping	1,183	1,084	1,067	1,039	979	1,028	1,038
Gas, water and electricity supply	225	193	189	182	167	161	165
Building and civil engi- neering	1,294	1,048	1,022	864	700	600	698
Distributive trades	1,888	1,598	1,276	1,140	1,016	971	978
National and local gov- ernment	936	897	906	863	857	844	891
Miscellaneous services ^a	1,250	1,014	770	672	576	559	560
Registered insured unemployed	1,013	434	100	61	44	40	68
Ex-members of H.M. For- ces not yet in employ- ment	—	—	—	—	13	14	27

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

See notes on p. 482.

TABLE I—Continued

B. FEMALES AGED 14-59

Thousands

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Total working population	5,094	5,572	6,110	6,915	7,253	7,107	6,768
Women's Auxiliary Services	—	55	105	307	461	467	437
Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Police	—	53	59	80	70	57	15
Total in Industry†	4,837	5,253	5,848	6,502	6,699	6,563	6,268
Agriculture and fishing	66	77	98	133	168	170	158
Mining and quarrying	5	6	9	12	14	14	14
Metal industries‡	433	570	892	1,383	1,635	1,580	1,257
Chemical industries§	73	104	208	322	293	251	198
Textiles	601	679	557	463	436	414	412
Clothing, boots and shoes	506	525	487	395	357	326	345
Food, drink and tobacco	263	267	277	270	245	239	242
Other manufactures|| . . . . .	384	385	380	369	336	341	343
Transport and shipping	50	62	127	178	197	209	214
Gas, water and electricity supply	17	20	25	32	33	32	31
Building and civil engineering	16	16	21	29	26	23	24
Distributive trades	999	1,041	1,056	1,033	993	956	980
National and local government	449	551	730	865	929	965	1,012
Miscellaneous services a	975	950	981	1,018	1,037	1,043	1,038
Registered insured unemployed	257	211	98	26	16	14	35
Ex-members of H.M. Forces not yet in employment	—	—	—	—	7	6	13

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

* The figures include employers and self-employed as well as employees, but exclude indoor private domestic servants.

† Women in part-time paid employment are included, two being counted as one unit. Until June 1941 the numbers were small; at subsequent dates the approximate numbers were—June 1942 . . . 380,000, June 1943 . . . 750,000, June 1944 . . . 900,000, June 1945 . . . 900,000.

‡ Metal manufacture, engineering, motors, aircraft and other vehicles, shipbuilding and ship-repairing, metal goods, etc.

§ Chemicals, explosives, paints, oils, etc.

|| Leather, wood, paper, bricks, tiles, pottery, glass and miscellaneous manufactures.

a Commerce, banking, insurance and finance, professional services, entertainment, hotels and restaurants, etc., laundries and cleaning, etc.

TABLE II

Changes in the distribution of manpower* in Great Britain
between June 1939 and June 1945

Thousands

	Numbers			Increase (+) or Decrease (-)			
	June 1939	June 1943	June 1945	June 1939-June 1943		June 1939-June 1945	
				Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Armed Forces and Auxiliary Services .	480	4,761	5,090	+ 4,281	+ 891.9	+ 4,610	+ 960.4
Civil Defence, National Fire Ser- vice and Police .	80	323	127	+ 243	+ 303.8	+ 47	+ 58.8
Manufactures:							
Equipment and sup- plies for the Forces	1,270	5,121	3,830	+ 3,851	+ 303.2	+ 2,560	+ 201.6
Home market . . .	4,555	2,373	2,580	- 2,182	- 47.9	- 1,975	- 43.4
Export	990	252	410	- 738	- 74.5	- 580	- 58.6
Total Manufactures	6,815	7,746	6,820	+ 931	+ 13.7	+ 5	+ 0.1
Non - manufacturing industries and ser- vices:							
Agriculture, fishing, mining, public utili- ties and transport .	3,298	3,241	3,288	- 57	- 1.7	- 10	- 0.3
Public Services (National and Local Government) . . .	1,385	1,786	1,903	+ 401	+ 29.0	+ 518	+ 37.4
Building and civil engineering	1,310	726	722	- 584	- 44.6	- 588	- 44.9
Distributive trades .	2,887	2,009	1,958	- 878	- 30.4	- 929	- 32.2
Other services . . .	2,225	1,613	1,598	- 612	- 27.5	- 627	- 28.2
Total Non-manufac- turing industries and services	11,105	9,375	9,469	- 1,730	- 15.6	- 1,636	- 14.7
Total in Industry .	17,920	17,121	16,289	- 799	- 4.5	- 1,631	- 9.1
Total—Forces, Civil Defence and Indus- try	18,480	22,205	21,506	+ 3,725	+ 20.2	+ 3,026	+ 16.4
Ex - members of H.M.F. not yet in employment	—	20	40	+ 20	—	+ 40	—
Insured persons regi- stered as unemployed	1,270	60	103	- 1,210	- 95.3	- 1,167	- 91.9
Total Working Popu- lation	19,750	22,285	21,649	+ 2,535	+ 12.8	+ 1,899	+ 9.6
Men	14,656	15,032	14,881	+ 376	+ 2.6	+ 225	+ 1.5
Women	5,094	7,253	6,768	+ 2,159	+ 42.4	+ 1,674	+ 32.9

* See notes * and † to previous table.

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

TABLE III

*Strength of the Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services of the United Kingdom
End of Month*

Thousands

	Armed Forces *				Women's Auxiliary Services†				
	Total	Royal Navy‡	Army §	Royal Air Force	Total	Women's Royal Naval Service	Auxiliary Territorial Service||	Women's Auxiliary Air Force	Nursing Services a
1939 September .	1,270	180	897	193	..	1.6	..	..	2.4
December .	1,557	214	1,128	215	43.1	3.4	23.9	8.8	7.0
1940 June .	2,212	271	1,650	291	56.6	5.6	31.5	11.9	7.6
December .	2,899	333	2,075	491	75.1	10.0	36.4	20.5	8.2
1941 June .	3,278	395	2,221	662	105.3	15.1	42.8	37.4	10.0
December .	3,602	449	2,340	813	216.0	21.6	85.1	98.4	10.9
1942 June .	3,784	496	2,453	835	307.5	28.6	140.2	125.7	13.0
December .	4,068	566	2,566	936	400.6	39.3	180.7	166.0	14.6
1943 June .	4,300	660	2,673	967	461.6	53.3	210.3	181.6	16.4
December .	4,435	756	2,680	999	467.5	64.8	207.5	176.8	18.4
1944 June .	4,500	778	2,720	1,002	466.4	73.5	199.0	174.4	19.5
December .	4,525	780	2,760	985	457.1	73.4	196.4	166.2	21.1
1945 June .	4,653	783	2,920	950	437.2	72.0	190.8	153.0	21.4

Source: *Statistical Digest of the War*, p. 9.

* Excluding men locally enlisted abroad.

† Including women locally enlisted abroad.

‡ Including men serving with the Royal Navy on T.124 agreements, Royal Marine Police and, up to June 1941, prisoners-of-war and missing.

§ Including men serving with the India Unattached List, but excluding the British Indian Service. Men locally enlisted abroad are included up to September 1941.

|| Excluding those locally enlisted abroad on modified forms of Auxiliary Territorial Service engagements whose documents were maintained outside the United Kingdom. From June 1944, all women locally enlisted abroad whose documents were maintained outside the United Kingdom are excluded.

a Including Queen's Army Schoolmistresses.

TABLE IV

Intake and Outflow of the Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services

A. ARMED FORCES*

Thousands

	Intake			Outflow		Transfers to and from reserve, releases etc. §	Net change in strength
	Called up under National Service Acts	Volunteers ‡	Direct officer intake	Casualties and other deaths	Medical discharges		
<i>Royal Navy†</i>							
1939 Sept. 3–Dec. 31	7.4	10.9	4.8	1.8	0.6	+ 23.3	+ 44.1
1940	61.4	50.3	8.8	7.4	4.3	+ 6.9	+ 115.6
1941	92.6	45.7	5.2	8.5	6.3	- 11.9	+ 116.9
1942	84.6	61.4	4.0	14.6	8.4	- 7.3	+ 119.5
1943	121.4	82.4	3.9	8.9	8.5	- 2.7	+ 187.6
1944	22.5	25.3	2.9	9.1	10.6	- 5.7	+ 25.4
1945	28.0	20.2	1.4	1.0	19.5	- 192.5	- 163.7
<i>Army</i>							
1939 Sept. 3–Dec. 31	112.8	153.8	9.6	0.7	5.7	- 26.9	+ 728.2
1940	858.6	252.1	21.2	54.7	61.3	- 69.2	+ 946.7
1941	365.7	70.1	11.9	35.1	88.4	- 58.7	+ 265.5
1942	363.0	61.1	7.5	97.1	75.9	- 32.6	+ 226.0
1943	184.0	48.6	4.7	32.6	55.5	- 35.4	+ 114.0
1944	214.7	33.2	4.0	67.7	67.7	- 36.7	+ 79.8
1945	166.8	31.5	2.4	+ 118.4 ^a	103.2	- 756.6	- 540.7
<i>Royal Air Force</i>							
1939 Sept. 3–Dec. 31	2.0	28.8	2.9	0.7	0.5	+ 64.4	+ 96.8
1940	124.6	158.6	8.6	6.8	3.5	- 5.4	+ 276.1
1941	174.4	156.5	10.9	11.8	10.1	+ 2.0	+ 321.9
1942	99.6	72.4	2.7	15.0	12.5	- 24.2	+ 123.1
1943	42.0	55.9	1.7	26.8	13.4	+ 3.4	+ 62.8
1944	17.3	25.0	0.5	21.7	15.0	- 19.3	- 13.6
1945	36.5	14.9	0.3	+ 3.8 ^a	18.8	- 304.1	- 267.5

Source: Central Statistical Office.

* Excluding men locally enlisted abroad. Figures for the Army, however, include those whose documents are maintained in the United Kingdom.

† Excluding men serving with the Royal Navy on T.124 agreements (and variants) but including Royal Marine Police.

‡ From January 1945 including intake into the Royal Navy from Deferred List.

§ From June 1945 including Class A and B releases.

|| Including about 485,400 mobilised and embodied at the outbreak of war.

^a The number of prisoners repatriated exceeded casualties.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

TABLE IV—Continued

B. WOMEN'S AUXILIARY SERVICES*

Thousands

	Intake		Outflow	Transfers to and from reserve, releases etc.†	Net change in strength
	Volunteers	Called up under National Service Acts	Medical discharges		
<i>Women's Royal Naval Service</i>					
1939 Sept. 3–Dec. 31	..	—	..	..	..
1940	..	—	..	..	..
1941	14·24	—	·26	— 2·39	+11·59
1942	18·70	2·14	·32	— 2·78	+17·74
1943	18·49	11·40	·50	— 3·87	+25·52
1944	11·69	4·09	·88	— 6·35	+ 8·55
1945	5·95	—	1·13	—27·15	—22·33
<i>Auxiliary Territorial Service</i>					
1939 Sept. 3–Dec. 31	..	—	..	..	..
1940	..	—	..	..	..
1941	58·07	—	·93	— 8·38	+48·76
1942	66·08	48·81	3·06	—16·24	+95·60
1943	28·42	21·90	4·14	—19·40	+26·78
1944	16·87	2·89	4·13	—26·68	—11·05
1945	20·95	·01	4·12	—79·97	—63·13
<i>Women's Auxiliary Air Force</i>					
1939 Sept. 3–Dec. 31	..	—	..	..	..
1940	..	—	..	..	..
1941	83·18	—	·48	— 4·78	+77·92
1942	61·82	16·20	2·70	— 7·77	+67·56
1943	11·75	17·06	3·64	—14·31	+10·
1944	11·83	0·50	3·57	—19·41	—10·66
1945	2·38	—	3·52	—69·16	—70·30

Source: Central Statistical Office.

* Excluding women locally enlisted abroad. Figures for the A.T.S., however, include those whose documents are maintained in the United Kingdom.

† From June 1945 including class A and B releases.

TABLE V

*Casualties suffered during the War by the Armed Forces and Women's Auxiliary Services**

	<i>Number</i>				
	Total	Killed	† Missing	Wounded	Prisoners of war
Armed Forces ‡					
Total	755,439	264,443	41,327	277,077	172,592
Royal Navy	73,642	50,758	820	14,663	7,401
Army	569,501	144,079	33,771	239,575	152,076
Royal Air Force	112,296	69,606	6,736	22,839	13,115
Women's Auxiliary Services					
Total	1,486	624	98	744	20
Women's Royal Naval Service	124	102	—	22	—
Auxiliary Territorial Service §	751	335	94	302	20
Women's Auxiliary Air Force	611	187	4	420	—

Source: Cmd. 6832, pp. 8 and 9

* From 3rd September 1939 to 14th August 1945 as reported to 28th February 1946.

† Including the following who were still missing at 28th February 1946: Royal Navy 340, Army 2,267, Royal Air Force 3,089, Auxiliary Territorial Service 18.

‡ Including men from overseas serving in the United Kingdom Forces, in particular from Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia.

§ Including Army Nursing Services.

TABLE VI
Registrations of Men under the Military Training Act and the National Service (Armed Forces) Acts

Date of registration	Age group registered (inclusive dates of birth)	Total number registered	Provisionally registered as conscientious objectors	Preference expressed for Royal Navy or Royal Marines	Preference expressed for Royal Air Force	Not available for general posting*	All other registrations†
1939:							
3 June	4 June 1918-3 June 1919	240,757	4,392	19,356	33,314		18,695
21 Oct.	2 Oct. 1917-3 June 1918	230,009	5,073	39,017	67,591	9,865	108,463
9 Dec.	4 June 1919-1 Oct. 1919						
	2 Dec. 1916-1 Oct. 1917						
	2 Oct. 1919-1 Dec. 1919	256,300	5,490	34,514	71,907	9,058	135,331
1940:							
17 Feb.	1 Jan. 1916-1 Dec. 1916						
	2 Dec. 1919-31 Dec. 1919	278,289	5,638	42,436	70,129	10,440	149,646
9 Mar.	1 Jan. 1915-31 Dec. 1915						
	1 Jan. 1920-9 Mar. 1920	346,731	5,803	57,655	85,432	15,030	182,811
6 Apr.	1 Jan. 1914-31 Dec. 1914						
	10 Mar. 1920-6 Apr. 1920	335,909	4,772	56,571	88,227	12,219	174,120
27 Apr.	1 Jan. 1913-31 Dec. 1913						
	7 Apr. 1920-27 Apr. 1920	336,894	4,218	59,710	89,524	12,531	170,911
25 May	1 Jan. 1912-31 Dec. 1912						
	28 Apr. 1920-25 May 1920	348,991	3,684	60,368	101,699	11,953	171,287
15 June	1 Jan. 1911-31 Dec. 1911						
22 June	1 Jan. 1910-31 Dec. 1910	397,858	2,387	25,949	54,938	7,959	217,525
	26 May 1920-22 June 1920	355,105	2,451	22,822	59,991	11,013	267,828
6 July	1 Jan. 1909-31 Dec. 1909						
13 July	1 Jan. 1908-31 Dec. 1908	330,455	1,898	41,171	84,609	7,191	195,586
20 July	1 Jan. 1907-31 Dec. 1907	342,367	1,752	44,601	95,436	7,407	193,181
27 July	1 Jan. 1906-31 Dec. 1906	331,030	1,669	44,423	105,089	7,071	172,778
	23 June 1920-27 July 1920	380,287	2,192	49,807	113,586	14,481	200,221
9 Nov.	1 Jan. 1905-31 Dec. 1905						
16 Nov.	28 July 1920-9 Nov. 1920	407,302	2,173	52,526	155,740	9,249	187,814

* † See notes on p. 490.

TABLE VI—Continued

Date of registration	Age group registered (inclusive dates of birth)	Total number registered	Provisionally registered as conscientious objectors	Preference expressed for Royal Navy or Royal Marines	Preference expressed for Royal Air Force	Not available for general posting*	All other registrations†
1941:							
11 Jan.	1 Jan. 1904-31 Dec. 1904	366,684	1,658	44,522	136,462	6,817	177,225
18 Jan.	10 Nov. 1920-31 Dec. 1920	.	.	.	.	.	.
22 Feb.	1 Jan. 1921-31 Dec. 1921	291,143	1,674	53,792	136,876	21,216	77,585
12 Apr.	1 Jan. 1903-31 Dec. 1903	319,456	1,342	31,632	97,073	3,502	185,907
17 May	1 Jan. 1902-31 Dec. 1902	323,881	1,176	36,763	108,941	3,304	173,697
31 May	1 Jan. 1901-31 Dec. 1901	306,907	1,170	32,717	101,083	3,652	168,285
21 June	1 July 1900-31 Dec. 1900	152,107	558	14,889	46,401	1,736	88,523
12 July	1 Jan. 1922-30 June 1922	142,671	665	35,046	64,200	6,543	36,217
6 Sept.	1 July 1922-31 Dec. 1922	156,465	696	35,241	71,219	7,744	41,565
13 Dec.	1 Jan. 1923-30 June 1923	162,926	657	42,918	62,162	8,819	48,370
1942:							
18 Apr.	1 July 1923-31 Dec. 1923	157,654	608	45,172	49,447	7,184	55,243
15 Aug.	1 Jan. 1924-30 June 1924	147,992	539	47,617	51,901	6,487	51,448
7 Nov.	1 July 1924-30 Sept. 1924	89,457	310	26,965	24,954	4,983	26,845
1943:							
9 Jan.	1 Oct. 1924-31 Mar. 1925	159,690	481	53,394	47,052	9,383	49,380
3 Apr.	1 Apr. 1925-30 June 1925	89,867	301	27,843	21,857	5,516	28,350
19 June	1 July 1925-30 Sept. 1925	78,864	267	29,586	19,578	3,333	27,100
18 Sept.	1 Oct. 1925-31 Dec. 1925	70,810	187	38,882	15,315	3,321	13,105
11 Dec.	1 Jan. 1926-31 Mar. 1926	71,033	173	29,536	15,770	3,618	21,936

* † See notes on p. 490.

TABLE VI—Continued

Date of registration	Age group registered (inclusive dates of birth)	Total number registered	Provisionally registered as conscientious objectors	Preference expressed for Royal Navy or Royal Marines	Preference expressed for Royal Air Force	Not available for general posting*	All other registrations †
1944:							
4 Mar.	1 Apr. 1926-30 June 1926	71,920	176	28,569	15,250	2,574	25,351
3 June	1 July 1926-30 Sept. 1926	69,420	181	27,098	13,751	1,367	27,083
2 Sept.	1 Oct. 1926-31 Dec. 1926	67,847	148	23,554	10,032	1,125	32,988
2 Dec.	1 Jan. 1927-31 Mar. 1927	76,563	155	24,952	9,487	1,406	40,563
1945:							
3 Mar.	1 Apr. 1927-30 June 1927	84,017	176	25,688	8,450	1,155	48,548
9 June	1 July 1927-30 Sept. 1927	72,028	157	21,827	11,135	1,224	37,685

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

* Includes registration forms of men to be interviewed by a Technical Committee or Joint Recruiting Board, men registered at Mercantile Marine Offices, registration forms noted 'seafaring', or 'joining H.M. Forces' and of limbles men and obvious cripples. For the June 1939 registration the figures for these categories are included in the column headed 'all other registrations'.

† Includes from 12th April 1941 registrations of men expressing preference for a Civil Defence Force. The numbers of such preferences were 48,747 at 12th April 1941, 36,144 at 17th May 1941, 32,745 at 31st May 1941 and 12,894 at 21st June 1941; at later registration dates the numbers were very small.

TABLE VII

*Registrations of Women under the Registration
for Employment Order, 1941*

A. ANALYSIS BY MARITAL CONDITION

Year of Birth	Date of registration	Numbers registered		
		Total	Single	Married and widows
1926	22 July 1944	241,053	236,207	4,846
	20 Jan. 1945			
1925	21 Aug. 1943	254,884	248,410	6,474
	15 Jan. 1944			
1924	5 June 1943	242,516	227,153	15,363
	7 Aug. "			
1923	27 June 1942	305,277	281,195	24,082
1922	11 April "	305,415	259,985	45,430
1921	10 Jan. "	335,953	259,377	76,576
1920	19 April 1941	425,643	322,246	103,397
1919	3 May "	310,062	201,084	108,978
1918	14 June "	269,935	142,196	127,739
1917	28 June "	259,396	117,567	141,829
1916	2 Aug. "	295,508	112,586	182,922
1915	30 Aug. "	313,947	100,725	213,222
1914	27 Sept. "	336,576	94,722	241,854
1913	25 Oct. "	344,755	88,532	256,223
1912	8 Nov. "	346,967	81,280	265,687
1911	22 Nov. "	331,369	72,930	258,439
1910	6 Dec. "	352,500	74,751	277,749
1909	24 Jan. 1942	330,601	68,140	262,461
1908	7 Feb. "	351,714	68,966	282,748
1907	21 Feb. "	337,873	64,615	273,258
1906	7 Mar. "	333,944	63,615	270,329
1905	21 Mar. "	335,168	63,594	271,574
1904	2 May "	326,707	61,460	265,247
1903	16 May "	321,174	59,424	261,750
1902	30 May "	328,173	58,626	269,547
1901	13 June "	300,999	53,646	247,353
1900	11 July "	322,976	54,609	268,367
1899	8 Aug. "	305,332	52,001	253,331
1898	5 Sept. "	288,566	50,720	237,846
1897	3 Oct. "	255,516	45,399	210,207
1896	11 Sept. 1943	275,295	46,478	228,817
1895	16 Oct. "	246,852	41,939	204,913
1894	23 Oct. "	249,111	42,431	206,680
1893	6 Nov. "	227,806	38,680	189,126

Source : Ministry of Labour and National Service.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

TABLE VII—Continued

B. ANALYSIS BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Year of birth	In full-time paid and unpaid employment	Working on own account	In part-time paid and unpaid employment	With no occupation
1926	224,227	153	1,490	15,183
1925	238,478	181	1,352	14,873
1924	224,920	295	1,430	15,871
1923	276,313	538	2,016	26,410
1922	268,800	571	1,836	34,208
1921	285,082	791	1,880	48,200
1920	345,098	1,851	3,167	75,527
1919	233,305	1,500	2,614	72,643
1918	181,824	1,630	2,741	83,740
1917	161,860	1,896	2,903	92,737
1916	165,503	2,476	3,845	123,684
1915	161,456	2,771	4,356	145,364
1914	160,584	3,172	5,262	167,558
1913	153,820	3,638	6,380	180,917
1912	144,496	3,996	7,114	191,361
1911	130,912	4,331	8,014	188,112
1910	133,965	5,022	9,299	204,214
1909	123,142	4,589	9,707	193,163
1908	123,748	5,582	11,363	211,021
1907	115,865	5,864	12,122	204,022
1906	112,712	6,222	13,737	201,273
1905	110,708	6,634	15,058	202,768
1904	108,376	6,788	16,408	195,135
1903	104,305	7,372	17,670	191,827
1902	103,959	8,026	19,010	197,178
1901	92,587	8,196	17,845	182,371
1900	96,232	9,095	21,184	196,465
1899	88,639	9,365	21,080	186,248
1898	83,307	9,330	20,856	175,073
1897	71,270	8,753	19,482	156,011
1896	79,285	9,543	25,624	160,843
1895	65,029	9,011	23,854	148,958
1894	63,506	9,546	24,281	151,778
1893	55,775	8,980	21,185	141,866

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

Note: The figures relate to the numbers who registered on or soon after the due dates of registration. If those who delayed their registration till later dates were included the figures would probably be increased, in general, by about one-twelfth.

TABLE VIII

Results of Medical Examinations of Men and Women by Medical Boards appointed under the Military Training Act, 1939, and the National Service Acts, 1939-1942

The figures tabulated on pages 495 and 496 exceed the numbers of men and women examined, since they include considerable numbers of medical re-examinations, of which there is no separate record. They relate both to volunteers¹ and to those called up under the Acts. Among the factors to be borne in mind are:

- (a) The medical standards adopted were designed to assess a man's fitness as a fighting unit. A condition, e.g. a non-disabling physical deformity, that would put a man into medical Grade IV, might in no way detract from his efficiency as an industrial unit.
- (b) Men obviously crippled or who had lost limbs were not called for medical examination.
- (c) Over the war period about 2,068,000, or about 31 per cent. of the total number of medical examinations of men, related to men under the age of twenty. The standard of fitness among these men was high, under 9 per cent. of the medical examinations falling into Grades III and IV. On the other hand, among the 802,000 medical examinations of men aged thirty-six and over, about 35 per cent. were in Grades III and IV. It must be borne in mind that the proportion of men retained in industry (and therefore not called for medical examination) was greater in the higher age groups than in the lower age groups, and the aggregated figures for all age groups do not therefore provide an accurate indication of the medical grading of *all* men of those ages.
- (d) From January 1943, when it became the practice to re-examine before call-up men who had not been medically examined in the preceding six months, a substantial proportion of the men in the older age groups in medical Grades I, II(a) and II were examined more than once. The percentage of fit men in these age groups is, therefore, correspondingly less than is suggested by the figures in the Tables.
- (e) The figures for women relate mainly to volunteers (even those who were called for examination under the National Service Acts were in the main those who preferred the Services to industry and were in that sense volunteers). It would therefore be unsafe to assume that their medical grading is typical of all women of the same ages.
- (f) The variations in the medical standards adopted throughout the whole period were negligible.

¹ Volunteers medically examined by the Service Departments are not included.

The Grades into which persons examined by Medical Boards were placed were defined in general terms as follows:

Grade I. Those who, subject only to such minor disabilities as can be remedied or adequately compensated by artificial means, attain the full normal standard of health and strength, and are capable of enduring physical exertion suitable to their age.

Grade II. Those who, while suffering from disabilities disqualifying them for Grade I, do not suffer from progressive organic disease, have fair hearing and vision, are of moderate muscular development, and are able to undergo a considerable amount of physical exertion not involving severe strain.

When a person is placed in this Grade solely on account of either defects of visual acuity or deformities of the lower extremities, or both, the letter '(a)' followed by the words 'vision' or 'feet' in brackets is inserted after the grade.

Grade III. Those who present such marked physical disabilities or evidence of past disease that they are not fit for the amount of exertion required for Grade II.

Grade IV. Those who suffer from progressive organic disease or are for other reasons permanently incapable of the kind or degree of exertion required for Grade III. These persons are unfit for any form of service.

TABLE VIII—Continued

A. MEN

(from 8th June 1939 to 26th July 1945)*

Grade	Age Group										Total	
	Under 20		20-25		26-35		36 and over				Number	Per cent.
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.				
I	1,702,010	82.3	1,247,990	73.5	1,255,196	62.3	343,486	42.8	4,548,682	69.1		
II (a) (Vision)	26,520	1.3	70,454	4.1	70,294	3.5	15,012	1.9	182,280	2.8		
II (a) (Feet)	47,306	2.3	40,529	2.4	79,436	4.0	39,145	4.9	206,416	3.1		
II	119,861	5.8	107,336	6.3	194,112	9.6	122,180	15.2	543,489	8.3		
Total, I and II	1,895,697	91.7	1,466,309	86.3	1,599,038	79.4	519,823	64.8	5,480,867	83.3		
III	64,673	3.1	128,983	7.6	201,355	10.0	119,505	14.9	514,516	7.8		
IV	107,546	5.2	103,442	6.1	213,319	10.6	162,824	20.3	587,131	8.9		
Total, III and IV	172,219	8.3	232,425	13.7	414,674	20.6	282,329	35.2	1,101,647	16.7		
Total	2,067,916	100.0	1,698,734	100.0	2,013,712	100.0	802,152	100.0	6,582,514	100.0		

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

* The figures exclude about 178,000 volunteers examined in 1939 whose medical grades are not known.

TABLE VIII—Continued

B. WOMEN

(from 9th June 1941 to 26th July 1945)

Grade	Age Group								Total	
	Under 20		20-25		26-30		31 and over		Number	Per cent.
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.		
I	181,092	86.1	190,504	75.9	27,013	72.5	13,442	62.4	412,051	79.2
II (a) (Vision)	1,458	0.7	2,264	0.9	417	1.1	206	0.9	4,345	0.8
II (a) (Feet)	5,382	2.6	9,186	3.7	1,801	4.8	1,291	6.0	17,660	3.4
II	10,306	4.9	18,955	7.5	3,496	9.4	2,880	13.4	35,637	6.9
Total, I and II.	198,238	94.3	220,909	88.0	32,727	87.8	17,819	82.7	469,693	90.3
III	5,194	2.5	12,876	5.1	1,940	5.2	1,632	7.6	21,642	4.1
IV	6,860	3.2	17,379	6.9	2,610	7.0	2,084	9.7	28,933	5.6
Total, III and IV	12,054	5.7	30,255	12.0	4,550	12.2	3,716	17.3	50,575	9.7
Total	210,292	100.0	251,164	100.0	37,277	100.0	21,535	100.0	520,268	100.0

Source: Ministry of Labour and National Service.

TABLE IX

*Number of Applicants for Deferment
dealt with each month by District Manpower Boards*

	Men			Women		
	Number of applications dealt with	Number granted	Number refused	Number of applications dealt with	Number granted	Number refused
1942						
January .	61,100	59,400	1,700	101,300	72,800	28,500
February	120,700	117,200	3,500			
March .	164,900	158,100	6,800			
April .	180,700	170,800	9,900			
May .	186,200	173,900	12,300			
June .	199,100	184,100	15,000	35,500	25,700	9,800
July .	193,500	176,900	16,600	31,800	22,400	9,400
August .	195,300	177,000	18,300	32,700	18,800	13,900
September	211,400	188,900	22,500	41,600	19,000	22,600
October .	226,900	200,200	26,700	34,600	15,300	19,300
November	192,000	159,700	32,300	24,000	12,000	12,000
December	170,900	127,300	43,600	24,700	14,600	10,100
1943						
January .	191,300	156,900	34,400	23,800	14,100	9,700
February	154,900	129,300	25,600	20,100	11,900	8,200
March .	193,800	163,000	30,800	36,000	23,600	12,400
April .	161,600	136,500	25,100	31,500	20,300	11,200
May .	154,500	131,900	22,600	29,600	14,400	15,200
June .	125,400	107,000	18,400	22,700	8,500	14,200
July .	120,800	102,800	18,000	15,800	6,800	9,000
August .	107,700	96,000	11,700	13,600	7,100	6,500
September	103,100	93,400	9,700	12,700	7,400	5,300
October .	109,600	93,600	16,000	10,500	6,000	4,500
November	99,800	87,500	12,300	8,200	4,700	3,500
December	81,500	72,300	9,200	7,000	3,700	3,300
1944						
January .	81,400	69,800	11,600	6,100	3,500	2,600
February	58,000	50,200	7,800	4,600	2,600	2,000
March .	72,800	56,800	16,000	6,800	2,800	4,000
April .	65,300	44,900	20,400	5,500	2,600	2,900
May .	75,800	57,900	17,900	4,500	2,600	1,900
June .	70,900	52,600	18,300	3,600	2,000	1,600
July .	62,200	47,200	15,000	3,200	2,000	1,200
August .	61,100	48,100	13,000	3,300	2,200	1,100
September	64,400	48,800	15,600	3,000	2,100	900
October .	74,600	58,500	16,100	2,700	1,800	900
November	69,800	57,100	12,700	2,100	1,400	700
December	50,000	40,400	9,600	3,600	2,900	700
1945						
January .	51,700	40,900	10,800	3,900	2,600	1,300
February	50,300	40,900	9,400	3,000	1,800	1,200
March .	55,400	43,300	12,100	2,700	1,800	900
April .	52,400	41,300	11,100	3,100	600	2,500
Total .	4,722,800	4,062,400	660,400	619,400	364,400	255,000

Source : Ministry of Labour and National Service.

TABLE X

Estimated Numbers of Persons Insured under the Unemployment Insurance Acts at July 1939, 1943 and 1945, by Regions

Region	Estimated numbers (thousands) insured in July*			Numbers for 1943 and 1945 expressed as percentage of the numbers in 1939	
	1939	1943	1945	1943	1945
MALES					
London and S. Eastern	2,606	1,677	1,638	64	63
Eastern	580	462	427	80	74
Southern	509	415	387	82	76
South Western	589	487	449	83	76
Midland	1,096	938	857	86	78
North Midland	794	653	613	82	77
E. and W. Ridings	1,042	821	779	79	75
North Western	1,588	1,237	1,163	78	73
Northern	783	638	622	81	79
Scotland	1,218	962	906	79	74
Wales	602	496	473	82	79
Great Britain	11,407	8,786	8,314	77	73
FEMALES					
London and S. Eastern	1,154	1,347	1,223	117	106
Eastern	170	267	249	157	146
Southern	133	254	232	191	174
South Western	162	269	249	166	154
Midland	431	596	521	138	121
North Midland	290	375	343	129	118
E. and W. Ridings	415	512	462	123	111
North Western	788	943	846	120	107
Northern	168	287	277	171	165
Scotland	459	593	557	129	121
Wales	94	225	205	239	218
Great Britain	4,264	5,668	5,164	133	121
TOTAL—MALES AND FEMALES					
London and S. Eastern	3,760	3,024	2,861	80	76
Eastern	750	729	676	97	90
Southern	642	669	619	104	96
South Western	751	756	698	101	93
Midland	1,527	1,534	1,378	100	90
North Midland	1,084	1,028	956	95	88
E. and W. Ridings	1,457	1,333	1,241	91	85
North Western	2,376	2,180	2,009	92	85
Northern	951	925	899	97	95
Scotland	1,677	1,555	1,463	93	87
Wales	696	721	678	104	97
Great Britain	15,671	14,454	13,478	92	86

Source: Cmd. 7225, p. 357.

* The numbers given exclude persons insured under the Special Schemes for the banking and insurance industries, a regional analysis of whom is not available. Adjustments have been made for alterations in the scope of unemployed insurance. The figures relate to the regions as constituted at 1st April 1946.

TABLE XI
Essential Work Orders

Note: These statistics exclude the Merchant Navy Order, Dock Labour Order and Trawler Fishing Order.

A. Approximate Numbers of Undertakings Scheduled and of Workers covered by the Orders.

Date	Numbers of undertakings scheduled	Numbers of workpeople covered		
		Men	Women	Total
June 1941 . . .	8,500	2,726,000	811,000	3,537,000
December 1941 . . .	29,200	4,822,000	1,007,000	5,829,000
December 1942 . . .	55,400	5,943,000	2,087,000	8,030,000
December 1943 . . .	63,400	6,224,000	2,352,000	8,576,000
December 1944 . . .	67,400	6,181,000	2,388,000	8,569,000
December 1945 . . .	67,500	6,174,000	2,384,000	8,558,000

B. Numbers of Applications to National Service Officers for Permission to Leave, Discharge or Transfer; Appeals from National Service Officers' Decisions and Applications Granted

APPLICATIONS MADE TO N.S.O.

Period	Leave	Discharge	Transfer	Total
1941	495,020	146,600	29,880	671,500
1942	1,389,766	580,017	106,868	2,076,651
1943	1,595,359	674,598	84,374	2,354,331
1944	1,563,891	707,770	67,057	2,338,718
1945 Jan.-June	855,276	408,907	20,885	1,285,068
July-Dec.	1,021,125	726,613	19,784	1,767,522
Total	6,920,437	3,244,505	328,848	10,493,790

APPEALS

Period	Leave	Discharge	Transfer	Total
1941	31,450	1,550	—	33,000
1942	98,021	5,371	244	103,636
1943	112,685	7,959	376	121,020
1944	94,586	8,344	209	103,139
1945 Jan.-June	49,591	4,122	119	53,832
July-Dec.	62,055	3,895	124	66,074
Total	448,388	31,241	1,072	480,701

APPLICATIONS GRANTED

Period	Leave	Discharge	Transfer	Total
1941	371,650	140,442	28,643	540,735
1942	1,072,882	565,122	103,414	1,741,418
1943	1,225,377	653,533	81,859	1,960,769
1944	1,235,783	685,817	64,762	1,986,362
1945 Jan.-June	687,251	398,547	20,050	1,105,848
July-Dec.	869,859	719,712	19,216	1,608,787
Total	5,462,802	3,163,173	317,944	8,943,919

Source: Cmd. 7225, pp. 340 and 341.

TABLE XII

Working Class Cost of Living Index

A. ANNUAL AVERAGES

	All items included in the index		Food	Clothing	Fuel and light	Rent and rates
	July 1914 = 100	1 September 1939 = 100	1 September 1939 = 100			
1938	156	101	102	100	99	99
1939	158	102	102	103	101	100
1940	184	119	119	137	115	101
1941	199	128	122	177	125	101
1942	200	129	117	192	129	101
1943	199	128	120	169	134	101
1944	201	130	122	166	141	101
1945	203	131	123	167	149	102

Source: *Annual Abstract of Statistics* No. 84, p. 252.

TABLE XII—Continued

B. MONTHLY MOVEMENTS

1 September 1939=100

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
<i>All items included in the index</i>								
January . . .	103	100	112	126	129	128	128	130
February . . .	101	100	114	127	129	128	129	130
March . . .	101	99	115	127	129	128	129	130
April . . .	99	99	115	128	128	128	129	130
May . . .	101	99	116	129	129	128	129	131
June . . .	100	99	117	129	128	128	129	132
July . . .	103	101	121	128	129	129	130	134
August . . .	101	100	119	128	130	128	130	132
September . . .	101	100	121	128	129	128	130	131
October . . .	100	106	122	128	129	128	130	131
November . . .	101	109	124	129	129	128	130	131
December . . .	101	112	126	130	129	128	130	131
<i>Food</i>								
January . . .	105	100	114	125	118	119	122	122
February . . .	103	100	117	124	118	119	122	122
March . . .	101	98	117	122	117	120	122	122
April . . .	99	98	114	123	116	120	122	122
May . . .	101	97	115	124	116	120	122	122
June . . .	100	97	114	123	115	120	122	123
July . . .	106	101	122	121	116	122	122	128
August . . .	102	99	119	121	116	121	123	125
September . . .	101	100	120	120	116	120	122	122
October . . .	101	109	122	120	117	122	122	122
November . . .	101	112	125	120	118	122	122	122
December . . .	101	114	125	120	119	122	122	122

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics No. 84, p. 252.

TABLE XIII

*Index of Weekly Wage Rates**

1 September 1939=100

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Jan.	98-99	99-100	105-106	118	127	133	139-140	145-146
Feb.	99-100	100	107	119	127-128	133-134	139-140	146
Mar.	99-100	100	108	119-120	128	134-135	140	147-148
Apr.	99-100	100	109	119-120	128	135-136	142	148-149
May	99-100	100	109-110	120	129	135-136	143	148-149
June	99-100	100	112-113	122	131	136	143	149
July	99-100	100	113-114	122	131-132	136-137	143-144	150-151
Aug.	99-100	100	114	122-123	131-132	136-137	144	151
Sept.	99-100	100-101	114	123	131-132	136-137	144-145	151-152
Oct.	99-100	101	115	123	131-132	137	144-145	151-152
Nov.	99-100	102-103	115	123-124	132	137-138	145-146	152-153
Dec.	99-100	103-104	116	126-127	132-133	138-139	145-146	153

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics No. 84, p. 118.

* The estimates cover all industries for which information is available but omit some small industries. The figures relate to the end of each month.

TABLE XIV

Changes in Average Earnings in the Years 1938-1945

Average Weekly Earnings of Manual Wage-Earners employed in Manufacturing Industries generally and in a number of the Principal Non-Manufacturing Industries in the United Kingdom, as ascertained by special inquiries made by the Ministry of Labour and National Service in October 1938, and at various dates between July 1940 and July 1945.

Note: The figures represent the actual earnings in one week of the months indicated, inclusive of payment for overtime, night-work, etc., and of amounts earned on piece-work or other methods of payment by results, before any deductions in respect of income-tax or of the workers' contributions to statutory insurance schemes. Administrative and clerical workers and other salaried persons have been excluded. The principal industries and services not covered by the inquiries are agriculture, coal mining, railway service, the shipping service, port transport (dock labour), the distributive trades, the catering trades, the entertainment industries, commerce and banking, and domestic service. The figures are subject to certain qualifications which are contained in a full account of the inquiry relating to July 1945, published in the Ministry of Labour Gazette for February 1946.

Date	Men (21 years and over)	Youths and boys	Women (18 years and over)	Girls	All workers
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS					
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
October 1938	69 0	26 1	32 6	18 6	53 3
July 1940	89 0	35 1	38 11	22 4	69 2
July 1941	99 5	41 11	43 11	25 0	75 10
January 1942	102 0	42 6	47 6	26 10	77 9
July 1942	111 5	46 2	54 2	30 3	85 2
January 1943	113 9	45 1	58 6	32 1	87 11
July 1943	121 3	47 2	62 2	33 10	93 7
January 1944	123 8	46 10	63 9	34 3	95 7
July 1944	124 4	47 4	64 3	34 11	96 8
January 1945	119 3	44 1	63 2	33 8	93 9
July 1945	121 4	45 6	63 2	35 1	96 1
PERCENTAGE INCREASE SINCE OCTOBER 1938					
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
July 1940	29	35	20	21	30
July 1941	44	61	35	35	42
January 1942	48	63	46	45	46
July 1942	61	77	67	64	60
January 1943	65	73	80	73	65
July 1943	76	81	91	83	76
January 1944	79	80	96	85	79
July 1944	80	81	98	89	82
January 1945	73	69	94	82	76
July 1945	76	74	94	90	80

Source: Cmd. 7225, p. 383.

TABLE XV

*Industrial Disputes**

A. NUMBER OF DISPUTES AND WORKPEOPLE INVOLVED

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
<i>Number of disputes† beginning in each year</i>								
<i>Analysis by industry:</i>								
All industries and services	875	940	922	1,251	1,303	1,785	2,194	2,293
Building	110	122	81	77	66	71	48	36
Mining and quarrying	374	417	386	482	555	862	1,275	1,319
Metals, engineering and shipbuilding	138	181	229	472	476	612	610	591
Textiles	42	73	60	42	47	52	48	41
Clothing	36	25	34	20	13	23	30	29
Transport	49	34	36	58	51	68	82	156
Other industries and services	126	88	96	100	95	97	101	121
<i>Workpeople directly and indirectly involved† (Thousands)</i>	274	337	299	360	456	557	821	531
<i>Analysis by industry:</i>								
All industries and services	274	337	299	360	456	557	821	531
Building	14	35	26	11	13	13	5	3
Mining and quarrying	174	207	190	153	257	296	571	244
Metals, engineering and shipbuilding	44	56	40	154	141	170	194	123
Textiles	7	8	10	7	10	6	6	4
Clothing	7	6	9	6	5	3	3	9
Transport	14	12	5	16	16	53	32	128
Other industries and services	14	13	19	13	14	16	10	20
<i>Analysis by duration of dispute:</i>								
Under 1 week	211	265	238	284	321	370	403	343
1 and under 2 weeks	39	43	27	46	92	130	99	67
2 and under 4 weeks	14	19	30	29	40	52	290	42
4 and under 6 weeks	3	7	1	1	3	4	1	23
6 and under 10 weeks	5	1	2	—	—	1	23	56
10 and under 20 weeks	1	1	1	—	—	—	5	—
20 weeks and upwards	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: *Annual Abstract of Statistics* No. 84, p. 117.

See notes on p. 505.

TABLE XV—Continued

B. WORKING DAYS LOST AS A RESULT OF DISPUTES

Thousands of days

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Working days lost through disputes which began in the year†	1,332	1,354	941	1,077	1,530	1,832	3,696	2,847
Workpeople involved:								
Under 100	102	90	66	82	66	82	105	151
100 and under 250	149	192	111	84	92	146	136	197
250 and under 500	314	308	111	151	129	214	252	205
500 and under 1,000	319	257	119	231	184	261	255	287
1,000 and under 2,500	306	280	309	229	459	338	392	391
2,500 and under 5,000	90	132	69	82	151	185	158	203
5,000 and upwards	52	95	156	218	449	606	2,398	1,413
Working days lost each year through disputes‡								
Analysis by industry:								
All industries and services	1,334	1,356	940	1,079	1,527	1,808	3,714	2,835
Building	115	131	73	36	29	25	7	5
Mining and quarrying	701	612	508	338	862	889	2,495	644
Metals, engineering and shipbuilding	243	332	163	556	526	635	1,048	528
Textiles	84	100	77	36	26	17	47	10
Clothing	33	13	40	16	19	7	5	68
Transport	40	56	13	54	35	181	85	1,491
Other industries and services	188	112	66	43	30	54	27	89

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics No. 84, p. 117.

* Disputes involving less than 10 workpeople and lasting less than one day have been omitted except when the aggregate duration in working days lost exceeded 100.

† The figures relate to strikes and lock-outs *beginning* in the years shown and the figures for working days lost include days lost in subsequent years where the strike or lock-out extended over more than one calendar year.

‡ This analysis shows the total working days lost *within* each year as a result of strikes or lock-outs in progress in that year whether beginning in that or an earlier year.

Index

INDEX

(The suffix letter 'n' denotes a footnote)

- Absenteeism, 138, 445
aircraft industry, 444
bus services, 405
- Accidents, industrial, 411-412, 413
- Accommodation
—See *Hostels, Housing, Lodgings*
- Actors, deferment of, 312
- Admiralty, 57, 72, 127, 184, 249
First Lord of (Mr. Winston Churchill), 72, 78, 85
(Mr. A. V. Alexander), 88, 238, 463
hostels, 400
hours of work, 444
housing, 399
munitions labour requirements and allocations, 168-169, 179, 200, 202-206, 209,
226-241 *passim*, 247-248, 290
programmes, 61, 178, 201
Service requirements, 174, 179
Tyneside strike, 463
—See also *Navy, Shipbuilding and repairing industry*
- Advertisements for labour
—See *Control of Employment Act, Restriction on Engagement Order*
- Agricultural Wages Board, 429-430
- Agriculture, 104, 128-129, 264
hostels, 401
Irish workers, 334-335, 338
juveniles, 355
labour requirements, 110, 111
prisoners of war, 347-348
reservation of workers, 311-312
wages, 426, 429-430, 434
- Agriculture, Department of, for Scotland, 264n, 336
- Agriculture, Minister of, 426
- Agriculture, Ministry of, 27, 336
employment of prisoners of war, 347-348
hostels, 401, 402
resettlement schemes, 264
- Air attacks, 104, 127, 142, 178, 195, 363, 397, 401, 402
flying bombs and rockets, 244, 248-252, 341, 402
hours of work, 443
transport, 404
—See also *Civil Defence Services, Industry: dispersal of*
- Air Ministry, 53, 57, 61, 72, 173, 326, 400, 409
- Air, Secretary of State for, 71, 238
- Aircraft industry, 19, 21, 174
employment, 77
Irish workers, 339-341
juveniles, 355
West Indians, 342-343
hours of work, 443-444
labour requirements and allocations, 101, 110, 111, 168, 169, 175, 179, 200, 201,
202-206, 209, 226-241 *passim*
labour shortages, 174-175
personnel management, 420-421

- Aircraft industry, *contd.***
 priority, 97, 98, 99, 206-210, 290-297 *passim*
 supply of women workers, 289, 295
 training, 381
 underemployment, 124, 444
 wages, 435
- Aircraft Production, Minister of** (Lord Beaverbrook), 98, 123, 443, 444
 (Col. Moore-Brabazon), 174
 (Sir Stafford Cripps), 201
- Ministry of, 174**
 hostels, 400, 401
 hours of work, 445
 housing, 399
 Irish labour, 339-341
 labour requirements and allocations, 168, 169, 175, 179, 200, 201, 202-206,
 209, 226-241 *passim*
 labour transfers, 123-124
 labour turnover, 123
 personnel management, 421
 priorities, 98, 99, 100, 206-210, 292
 programmes, 111, 167, 201-202
 supply of women workers, 289
 —*See also Aircraft industry, Aircraft programmes*
- Aircraft programmes, 38, 39, 62, 111, 167, 171, 174-175, 179, 201-202**
 Aliens, friendly, employment of, 344-347
- Allocation system**
 and manpower budgets, 168, 171, 176, 475
 and priorities, 98-100
 —*See also Manpower budgets*
- Allowances, 126**
 during training, 377, 386
 lodging, for Irish workers, 338
 maintenance, for juveniles, 357, 368
 travelling, 405-406
 —*See also Grants*
- Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.), 70, 126, 458, 459, 460**
- Ammunition, 97, 201**
- Amulree Committee, 446**
- Anderson, Sir John (later Lord Waverley)**
 —*See Eschequer, Chancellor of, Lord Privy Seal, Lord President of the Council*
- Appeals Tribunals, 4, 60**
 and coal mining ballot, 254-255
 for conscientious objectors, 44, 45, 55, 113, 155-157, 294
 Local Appeal Boards, 138, 165, 294
 Military Service Hardship Committees, 157-158
- Appointments Service, 217, 271-272, 322-325**
 Nursing Appointments Offices, 291, 324
 —*See also Central Register*
- Apprentice Master Scheme, 364**
- Apprentices**
 deferment, 309
 in building industry, 355-356, 361-365
 strikes, 459-460, 465-466
 —*See also Training*
- Arbitration**
 First World War, 8
 between the wars, 32
 Second World War, 95, 455, 456
 —*See also Compulsory Arbitration*
- Area Boards**
 —*See Regional organisation*
- Armed Forces**
 Cadet Corps, 353
 Casualties, 487
 demobilisation, 258-261, 273-275
 doctors for, 413-414
 intake and outflow, 485-486

- recruitment,
 First World War, 1-6, 15, 17
 rearmament period, 39
 plans for in event of war, 41, 42, 44, 46, 50, 51, 52, 54, 63
 Second World War, 75, 86, 104, 111, 112, 113, 136, 150-164, 187-189, 195-196,
 346-347, 472, 473, 488, 493-496
 plans for in post-war period, 263
- releases from, 69-70
 for bomb damage repairs, 249
 to coal mines, 186
 to machine tool industry, 70
- requirements and allocations, 54, 61, 63, 101, 102, 103, 110, 111, 112, 113, 153, 168,
 169, 173-174, 177, 178, 179, 226-241 *passim*
 of skilled labour, 153
- strength of, 102, 484
 —See also *Manpower, distribution of*
 training of technicians, 325-330
 use of skilled labour, 154, 327
 volunteers for, 227
 —See also *Air Force, Army, Conscription, District Manpower Boards, Joint Recruiting Boards, Navy, Reservation, Resettlement, Women's Auxiliary Services*
- Army, 54, 57, 97, 178-179, 353
 ceiling, 105-107, 162, 172
 engineering cadetships, 327, 329-330
 equipment of, programmes for, 39, 61, 62, 105, 106, 168, 169, 171
 —See also *Ministry of Supply: programmes*
 in First World War, 4, 6, 13
 priority for, 97, 98
 releases from, 126
 requirements and allocations, 39, 48, 53, 61, 62, 102, 106, 110, 111, 159-160, 162,
 172, 177, 179, 202-206, 209, 226-241 *passim*
 strength of, 102, 484
 training for in Government Training Centres, 374, 378, 380, 381
 use of skilled labour, 154
 —See also *Armed Forces, Auxiliary Territorial Service, Home Guard, War Office*
- A.R.P.
 —See *Civil Defence Services*
- Asheton, Mr. R. (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour), 443
- A.T.S.
 —See *Auxiliary Territorial Service*
- Attlee, Mr. Clement
 —See *Lord Privy Seal, Lord President of the Council*
- Austin Motor Company, 339
- Austrian refugees, 345-347
- Auxiliary Territorial Service, 163, 173, 381
 —See also *Women's Auxiliary Services*
- Bacon curing industry, 192-193
- Ball bearing industry, 183, 208
- Battle of Britain, 98
- Beaverbrook, Lord
 —See *Aircraft Production, Minister of*
- Belgian refugees, 345-347
- Betteshanger colliery, 460-462
- Beveridge, Sir William (later Lord), 101, 107, 145, 154, 160, 282
 —See also *Manpower Requirements Committee*
- Beveridge Committee on the Use of Skilled Men in the Services, 327
- Bevin, Ernest, as trade union leader, 79, 87, 88, 140
 —See also *Labour and National Service, Minister of*
- 'Bevin Boys' Scheme
 —See *Coal mining industry: ballot scheme*
- Billeting, 396-399
- Birmingham, 21, 193, 246, 363, 397
- Biscuit industry, 192-194

- Board of Education
—*See Education, Board of*
- Board of Trade
—*See Trade, Board of*
- Boilermakers, strike of, 462-464
- Bolero scheme, 173, 188
- Bomb damage
—*See Air attacks*
- Bombardon programme for Mulberry harbour, 246
- Bomber programme
—*See Aircraft programmes*
- Boot and shoe industry, 438
- Bottlenecks, 100, 101
—*See also Priorities, labour*
- Boys, employment of, 349-370
- British Broadcasting Corporation, 246, 386, 409, 410
- British Employers' Confederation, 58, 417, 446
- British Legion, 27
- British Medical Association, 412, 413
- British Restaurants, 422
- British War Economy*
—*See Hancock, W. K. and M. M. Gowing*
- British War Production*
—*See Postan, M. M.*
- B.T.H. Magneto factory, 122
- Building Apprenticeship Training Council, 362, 363
- Building industry, 22, 126-127, 187-188
canteens, 417
employment of Irish workers, 341
employment of juveniles, 361-365
hostels, 402
labour for bomb damage repairs, 244, 248-252
labour for Mulberry harbours, 243-244
labour policy, 76, 93, 120, 122, 139, 224
labour priorities, 97, 98
labour reductions in, 167
labour requirements, 63
labour shortages, 76, 83, 135
programmes, 76, 91
reservation and deferment, 173-174, 311
unemployment, 73, 76
- Burning machines, manning of, 462-464
- Bursaries, state, 326, 327, 328-329
—*See also Grants*
- Bus services, 403-406, 435, 458
—*See also Transport*
-
- Cabinet, 17, 52
—*See also War Cabinet*
- Call-up
—*See Armed Forces: recruitment*
- Cadet corps, 353
- Canteens, 399, 416-419
dock, 421-422
seamen's, 423
training of workers for, 386-387
- Capacity, utilisation of, 91
—*See also Contracts, co-ordination of, Industry, location of*
- Careers, advice on, 272, 349-352, 366-370
- Casualties in Armed Forces, 487
- Catering industry, 438-440
Trade Board for, 35
training of workers, 386-387
- Catering Wages Act, 438-440
- Catering Wages Commission, 438-440

- Cave, Viscount, 34
 C.E.M.A., 409
 Central Consultative Council of Voluntary Organisations, 395, 406, 410
 Central Council for Works and Buildings, 362
 Central Medical War Committee, 413
 Central Register 51, 56, 217, 313, 319-322, 323, 325, 326, 327, 346
 Central Statistical Office, 445
 Chamberlain, Mr. Neville
 —See *Prime Minister, Lord President of the Council*
 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Lord Hankey), 325, 326
 Charge-hands, training of, 385-386, 387-388
 Chelmsford, Lord, 350
 Chemicals and explosives industries
 labour requirements, 63, 110
 wages, 436
 Chemists
 registration, 321
 training, 325-330
 —See also *Scientific Workers*
 Cherwell, Lord (Paymaster General), 227
 Chief Industrial Commissioner, 8, 403
 Chiefs of Staff, 235, 240, 241
 Chocolate industry, 192-193
 Churchill, Mr. Winston
 —See *Admiralty: First Lord of, Prime Minister*
 Citrine, Sir Walter (later Lord), 78, 96
 Civil Defence, by T. H. O'Brien, 250n
 Civil Defence Services, 48, 49, 51, 52, 101, 102, 103, 155, 165, 195-196
 deferment scheme, 315
 priority for, 295
 releases from, 249
 requirements and allocations, 102, 110, 111, 162, 179, 206, 227, 237
 —See also *Manpower, distribution of*
 Civil engineering workers, 122, 139
 Irish, 334, 338-339, 341
 for Mulberry harbours, 243-244
 reservation of, 311
 Civil Industry and Trade
 —See *Hargreaves, E. L. and M. M. Gowing*
 Civil Service, 203, 205n
 juveniles, 355
 recruitment, 318, 319, 321
 reservation and deferment, 312
 Clothing industry
 concentration, 149, 190-191, 194, 195
 juveniles, 355
 Clothing price index, 428
 Clothing Wages Council, 438
 Clubs, recreational, 406-408
 for seamen, 423
 Clydeside
 boilermakers' dispute, 462-463
 dilution, 68
 dock industry, 140
 strikes, 8, 459, 465-466
 training of shipbuilding workers, 382-383
 Coal
 —See *Court, W. H. B.*
 Coal mining industry, 19-22, 128, 185-186, 187
 and Essential Work Order, 139
 ballot scheme, 252-255, 384-385, 465-466
 deferment scheme, 310-311, 316
 hostels, 401, 402
 juveniles, 355
 labour requirements, 110, 111, 227, 310-311
 prices, 428
 registration of miners, 144

- Coal mining industry, *contd.*
 strikes, 8-9, 431, 458, 460-462, 469, 470
 training, 384-385
 unemployment, 23, 24, 36
 wages, 360, 431, 432, 434, 458
- Colonics
 hostels for seamen from, 423
 importation of labour from, 342-343
- Colville, Lady Cynthia, 395
- Commissioners for the Special Areas, 30
- Commissions on industrial unrest, 9
- Committee of Imperial Defence, 40, 42, 43, 59, 331
 —*See also Manpower Policy Committee of, Manpower Sub-Committee of, Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower*
- Committee on Production, 8, 10, 427
 —*For other Committees see under subjects concerned*
- Communal feeding
 —*See Canteens*
- Communist Party, 465
- Compulsory arbitration
 First World War, 8, 9, 32
 pre-war plans for, 58, 59
 Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, 133-134, 425-428, 438, 448-454, 455-457, 462
 Prosecutions under, 466-471
- Concentration of industry
 —*See Industry, Concentration of*
- Concerts for workers, 408-411
- Conciliation, 455-456
 Ministry of Labour responsibility for, 42, 43, 45, 47, 56, 57
 Officers, 456
- Conditions of employment, 440-454, 457
 —*See also Welfare*
- Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order
 —*See Compulsory Arbitration*
- Conditions of work
 —*See Welfare*
- Conductors and conductresses, bus
 —*See Bus services*
- Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, 465
- Conscientious objectors, 41, 44, 55, 113, 151, 152, 155-157
- Conscription
 First World War, 3
 pre-war plans for, 41, 48, 49, 50
 Second World War, 150, 163-164, 279-280
 plans for in post-war period, 259
 —*See also Armed Forces: recruitment, Labour, control of, Women's Auxiliary Services: compulsory call-up*
- Constructional Engineering Union, 245
- Consultation, interdepartmental, 219-221, 302, 306
- Consultation, joint
 —*See Joint consultation*
- Contracts, co-ordination of, 38, 39, 47, 70, 71, 74, 78, 84, 86, 474
- Control of Employment Act, 58, 59, 60, 62, 67, 68, 76, 85, 93
- Control of Engagement Order, plans for in post-war period, 263
- Control of Engagement Order for women
 —*See under Women*
- Controlled Establishments
 First World War, 10, 12, 13
 pre-war plans for, 45, 94
- Cost of living
 First World War, 7, 8, 9
 Second World War, 428-437, 500-501
 —*See also Prices*
- Cotton industry, 19, 20
 concentration, 149, 181, 194
 labour allocations, 227

- Trade Board, 35
unemployment, 36
- Court, W. H. B., *Coal*, 385n, 431n, 432n, 458n
- Courts of Inquiry
apprentices' strike, 460
dock industry, 468
shipbuilding industry, 463
—*See also Conciliation*
- Coventry, 401
dilution, 68
high earnings, 83, 84
labour shortage, 76
labour turnover, 122-123
shortage of lodgings, 397-398
strikes, 5, 9, 468
- Cripps, Sir Stafford (Minister of Aircraft Production), 201
- Czech refugees, 345-347
- D-Day, 447, 458
labour requirements for, 242-248
- Dampier, Sir William, 331
- De-casualisation
—*See Dock industry*
- Defence, Minister of
—*See Prime Minister*
- Defence Committee of the War Cabinet, 168, 174
- Defence of the Realm Act, 8
- Defence Regulations (58A etc.), 95, 122, 137, 165, 222, 393, 398n
IAA, 470-471
- Deferment
—*See Reservation and deferment*
- Demarcation, 457, 462-464
- Demobilisation
—*See Armed Forces*
- Depressed areas, 29, 30
—*See also Scotland, Unemployment, Wales*
- Depression, trade, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25
- Designation
—*See Priorities, labour*
- Dilution, 41, 43, 47, 48, 50, 62, 95, 98, 103, 120
building, 188, 248
engineering, 7, 40, 63-66, 70, 76, 116, 126, 182, 357, 450
agreements, 68, 69, 92-93, 281, 357
opposition to, 68, 69
machine tool industry, 69, 451-452
Mulberry harbours scheme, 243-244
railway workshops, 184
restoration of pre-war practices, 92-93
shipbuilding, 462-464
with women workers, 279-298
—*See also District Manpower Boards, Labour Supply Inspectors, Training*
- Directions to employers
—*See Industry, control of*
- Directions to employment, 94, 108, 109, 113, 117, 118, 119, 122-123, 127, 136, 223-224, 263
Irish workers, 338
part-time workers, 291
trainees, 385
—*See also Labour, control of, Voluntaryism, policy of, in labour supply*
- Director of Public Prosecutions, 466
- Director-General of Manpower, 216, 302, 303
- Disabled workers, training and resettlement of, 26, 27, 267-270, 390
- Discipline
and Essential Work Order, 141-142
and stoppages of work, 457
- Dispersal of industry, 403, 406

- Disputes, trade, 455-471
 —See also *Arbitration, Compulsory arbitration, Conciliation, Industrial relations, Strikes*
- Distributive trades, 22, 188-189
 Juveniles, 355
 Trade Boards and Wages Councils, 35, 437-440
- District Manpower Boards, 120, 162, 217, 294, 300-310, 313, 497
- Dock industry, 129-130
 canteens, 421-422
 deferment scheme, 310-311, 316
 labour requirements for D-Day, 247
 National Dock Labour Corporation and decasualisation, 139-141
 reception of transferred workers, 396
 strike, 459
- Doctors
 factory, 412-416
 shortage of, 313
- Domestic workers, training of, 386-387
- Dominions, importation of labour from, 342
- Double shifts
 —See *Shifts*
- Doughty, Sir Charles, 461
- Draughtsmanship, training in, 379, 380
- Drivers
 shortage and reservation of, 403, 404-405
 training of, 383-384
- Drop forging industry, 135, 400
- Dunkirk crisis, 46, 94, 97, 98
- Dutch refugees, 345-347
- Earnings, 430, 434, 435, 436, 437
 changes in average, 503
 —See also *Poaching, Wages*
- Economic Policy Committee of the War Cabinet, 64, 85
- Economist, The*, 432
- Education authorities, and Juvenile Employment Service, 349-352, 367-370
- Education, Board (later Ministry) of, 27, 330n, 369, 386
 deferment of teachers etc., 312
 Emergency Training Scheme, 379
 entertainment of workers, 409
 Juvenile Employment Service, 349-352, 367-370
 resettlement schemes, 264
 training of technicians and scientists, 326, 327
 youth clubs, 406
- Education, Department of,
 for Scotland, 27, 330n, 369, 379, 386
- Eire, importation of labour from, 183, 187, 246, 250, 334-341
 —See also *Northern Ireland*
- Electrical engineering industry, 19, 21
- Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, 94, 95
- Emigration, 334-348
- Employers' Association of the Port of London, 139
- Employers' Associations
 and wages control, 425
 in catering trades, 439
 —See also *Compulsory arbitration: Conditions of Employment Order, Joint consultation and under separate associations*
- Employment Exchanges, 28, 29, 44, 50, 56, 72, 92, 98, 100, 122, 183, 216-217, 225n,
 271, 294, 323, 335, 476, 477
 Irish, 335, 336, 337
 for aliens, 345
 —See also *Control of Employment Act and Labour Exchanges*
- Employment policy, post-war, 256-275
- Engineering and allied industries, 20, 77, 122-126, 181-185
 and Essential Work Order, 139
 hours of work, 441, 442
 Irish workers, 338

- juveniles, 355
 - labour requirements, 63, 110
 - skilled workers, requirements of, 63
 - shortage of,
 - First World War, 6
 - rearmament period, 39
 - Second World War, 66, 67, 71, 75, 116, 118
 - strikes, 458, 470
 - apprentices, 459-460
 - travelling allowances, 406
 - unemployment, 23, 24, 36
 - wages, 427, 430
 - West Indians, 342-343
 - See also *Dilution, Poaching, Training*
 - Engineering Cadetships, 327, 329-330
 - Engineering Employers' Federation, 68, 69, 182, 458, 459, 460
 - Engineers
 - deferment of trainees, 313
 - registration, 321
 - training, 325-330
 - English Electric Company, 410
 - Entertainments for war workers, 408-411
 - Entertainments National Service Association (E.N.S.A.), 409-410
 - Essential industries
 - allocations to, 209-210, 226-241 *passim*
 - definition of, 175
 - See also *Manpower, distribution of; non-munitions Industries*
 - Essential Work Orders, 108, 109, 123, 136, 137-143, 224-225, 250, 263, 429, 438, 499
 - and canteens, 419
 - and juveniles, 352-353
 - See also *Directions to employment*
 - Estimates of labour requirements, calculation and reliability of, 111, 174-175, 473, 474
 - See also *Manpower budgets*
 - Europe, hypotheses about ending of war in, 226-241 *passim*
 - Evacuees, housing of, 397, 398, 399, 402
 - Excess profits tax, 94
 - See also *Profits, control of*
 - Exchequer, Chancellor of
 - (Sir John Simon), 80, 81, 82, 424, 429
 - (Sir Kingsley Wood), 210
 - (Sir John Anderson), 210, 213-214, 226-241 *passim*, 428, 429, 432
 - Explosives
 - See *Chemicals*
 - Export trade, 112, 236
-
- Factories Acts, 14, 121, 411
 - hours of work, 441, 442, 443
 - medical services, 412
 - responsibility for administration of, 393-394
 - See also *Factory Inspectorate*
 - Factories (Canteens) Order, 417, 418-419
 - Factories (Medical and Welfare Services) Order, 412n, 414, 420
 - Factory and Welfare Advisory Board, 121, 394, 395n, 397, 403, 416
 - Factory and Welfare Department
 - See *Ministry of Labour*
 - Factory inspectorate, 121, 215, 393, 411-421
 - canteens, 417, 418
 - hours of work, 441-445
 - personnel management, 420
 - responsibility for, 393-394
 - Fair Wages Resolution, 93
 - Far East, hypotheses about ending of war in, 226-241 *passim*
 - Fares, railway and bus, 403-406
 - Farmers, subsidy to, 426

- Ferguson, S. M. and H. Fitzgerald, *Studies in the Social Services*, 292n
 Films, 409
 Fines, on strikers, 461, 462, 464, 467-469
 Firms
 control of.—*See Industry, control of*
 estimates of labour requirements, 473, 474
 proposed grouping of, 92
 training by, 92, 372-378 *passim*, 387-388
 First World War
 changes in employment in, 14
 lessons of, 1-17
 welfare of workers in, 393
 Fitzgerald, H and S. M. Ferguson, *Studies in the Social Services*, 292n
 Flame planing machine, 462-464
 Flying bombs
 —*See Air attacks*
 Food
 for canteens, 422
 Index, 501
 Industries, 149, 190, 191-194
 Wages Council, 438
 Minister of (Lord Woolton), 418-419
 Ministry of, 190, 192-194, 318n, 418
 subsidies on, 428, 432
 Foremen, training of, 385-386, 387-388
 Forster, Sir John, 186, 360, 361
 France, 61
 labour requirements for invasion of, 242-248
 French refugees, 345-347
 Fuel and Power, Minister of (Major Gwilym Lloyd George), 253, 361, 384, 385
 Ministry of, 400-401
 Further education, grants for, 263-266
- Gas supply industry, 139, 340
 German prisoners of war, 348
 German refugees, 345-347
 Germany, 38, 61
 hypotheses about ending of war with, 226-241 *passim*
 Girls, employment of, 349-370
 Government establishments, and Essential Work Order, 138
 —*See also Royal Ordnance Factories*
 Government Instructional Factories, 26, 27
 Gowing, M. M., *part author*
 —*See Hancock, W. K., Hargreaves, E. L.*
 Grants
 factory canteens, 417
 further education, 263-266
 recreational clubs, 408
 rest homes, 410-411
 training in personnel management, 420
 —*See also Allowances*
 Greene Board, 360, 431, 432
 Greene, Sir W. Graham, 40, 331
 Greenwood, Mr. Arthur (Minister without Portfolio), 97
 Grouping of firms, proposed, 92
 Guns, priority for, 97
- Hammond, R. J., *Food*, 82n, 149n, 190n, 194n
 Hancock, W. K. and M. M. Gowing, *British War Economy*, 318n, 428n
 Handbook on National Service, 51, 52
 Hankey, Lord, 271-272
 —*See also Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*

- Hardship, postponement of call-up for, 157-158
 Hargreaves, E. L. and M. M. Gowing, *Civil Industry and Trade*, 118n, 131n, 149n, 190n, 192n
 Hat trade, 192
 'Heads of Labour Policy', Memorandum on, 107-109
 Health, Minister of, 413, 415
 Ministry of, 152, 251, 365, 393
 and billeting, 396, 398
 and factory medical services, 415-416
 —See also *Local Government Board*
 Health of Munitions Workers Committee, 393
 Health of workers, 412-416
 Heavy work,
 labour for, 182-183
 Irish labour for, 334-341
 prisoners of war for, 347-348
 —See also *under industries concerned*
 Hillington, Rolls-Royce factory at, 458
 Hitler, 38, 39, 54, 61, 78, 79, 87, 88
 Holidays, 445-447
 and Essential Work Order, 142-143
 with Pay Act, 446
 Holland, refugees from, 345-347
 Home Affairs, Secretary of State for, 196, 393, 394, 441
 Home Guard, 165, 353
 Home Office, 15, 48, 49, 121, 215
 administration of Factories Acts, 393-394, 417
 employment of aliens, 344
 hours of work, 441
 Home Policy Committee of the War Cabinet, 393, 400, 412
 Hosiery industry, concentration of, 148, 181
 Hospitals
 and recruitment of industrial nurses, 414
 deferment schemes, 310-312, 316
 Irish labour for, 335, 341
 provision of nurses for, 291-292
 training of domestic workers for, 387
 Hostels, 118, 399-402
 for bomb damage repair workers, 251-252
 for Irish workers, 338
 for seamen, 423
 for West Indians, 343
 Reception, 396-397
 —See also *Housing, Lodgings*
 Hostels Advisory Committee, 400
 Hours of work, 83, 138, 434, 441-445
 of boys in building industry, 363
 House of Commons, 60
 and hours of work, 443
 and wages, 430, 432, 439
 Housing, 65
 of bomb damage repair workers, 251-252
 married quarters, 399
 —See also *Hostels, Lodgings*
How to pay for the war, by J. M. Keynes, 79n
- Immigration, 334-348
 Imperial Chemical Industries, 339
 Imprisonment
 of strikers, 461, 462, 468
 of Trotskyites, 466
 Ince, Sir Godfrey, 367
 Incitement to strike, 470-471
 Indians, training of, 343

- Industrial Court, 32, 36, 45, 438, 455, 456
 —See also *Arbitration, Conciliation*
- Industrial Health Advisory Committee, 416
- Industrial Health Research Board, 443, 447
- Industrial nursing, 414-415
- Industrial population
 —See *Manpower, distribution of*
- Industrial relations, 7, 8, 31-36, 47, 67, 429
 —See also *Arbitration, Compulsory arbitration, Conciliation, Joint consultation, Strikes*
- Industrial Welfare Society, 420
- Industries
 essential
 —See *Essential industries*
 less essential
 —See *Less essential industries*
 non-munitions, 167
 call-up from, 104
 labour requirements and allocations, 117, 202, 203, 205, 206
 substitution by women in, 103
 —See also *Manpower, distribution of*
- Industry
 concentration, 130-132, 146-149, 181, 189-195, 287
 control, 38, 90, 91, 94
 dispersal, 403, 406
 location, 39, 40, 74, 103, 118, 130-131, 180-181, 282-283, 296-297, 474
 —See also *Contracts, co-ordination of*
 training in, 92, 372-378 *passim*, 387-388
- Inflation, 424-437 *passim*
- Information, Ministry of, 318n
- Inman, P., *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, 74n, 98n, 99n, 122n, 139n, 383n, 402n, 445n
- Institute
 of Chemistry, 319
 of Personnel (formerly Labour) Management, 419-420
 of Physics, 319
- Insurance Act, 14
- Interdepartmental (Humbert Wolfe) Committee on Labour Requirements, 62-64, 65, 77, 78, 101
- Interdepartmental Committee on Wages in the Armament Industry, 83
- International Labour Conference, 422-423
- Ireland, Northern, importation of labour from, 250
 —See also *Eire*
- Iron and steel industry
 and Essential Work Order, 139
 Irish labour, 339
 reservation, 311
 Ring Fence Scheme, 222
- Iron ore mines and quarries, 129, 186, 187, 347
- Italian prisoners of war, 347-348
- Italian refugees, 345-346
- Japan, 38
 hypotheses about ending of war with, 226-241 *passim*
- Japanese war, reconstruction plans during, 256-266
- Jerricans, 201
- Joint consultation, 32, 33, 34, 35
- Joint consultation between government, industry and other bodies, 40, 58, 59, 60, 64, 67, 75, 95, 96, 131, 138, 221-222, 302, 476
 Advisory Bodies for Central and Appointments Register, 320, 322, 323
 in building industry, 126-127, 362
 in distributive trades, 189
 in shipbuilding industry, 130, 185
 on wages, 80, 81, 133, 425-427
 —See also *Factory and Welfare Advisory Board, Hostels Advisory Committee, Industrial Health Advisory Committee, Joint Consultative Committee, Juvenile Advisory Committees, Labour Supply Committees, National Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment, National*

- Joint Advisory Council, Regional Transport Consultative Committees, Seamen's Welfare Advisory Board, Women's Consultative Committees*
- Joint Consultative Committee, 95, 133, 366, 367, 425-427, 440, 476
—See also *National Joint Advisory Council*
- Joint Industrial Councils, 32, 33, 34, 437-440
bus services, 405
catering industry, 419
- Joint negotiating machinery
—See *Arbitration, Compulsory arbitration, Conciliation, Joint consultation, Strikes*
- Joint Recruiting Boards, 313-314, 322, 327, 328, 331-333
- Joint War Production Staff, 171, 172, 234-235, 239, 240
- Jordanvale Training Scheme, 382-383
- Jowitt, Sir William (later Earl)
—See *Paymaster General, Minister without Portfolio*
- Jute industry, 191
- Juvenile Advisory Council and Committees, 351, 357, 369-370
- Juvenile Employment Service, 349-352, 366-370
- Juveniles, 349-370
hours of work, 441-445
in coal mining industry, 186
in shipbuilding industry, 185
- Kennet, Lord, 312
- Keynes, J. M., *How to pay for the war*, 79n
- Kingsley Wood, Sir (Chancellor of the Exchequer), 210
- Kohan, C. M., *Works and Buildings*, 362n
- Labour, control of, 62, 472
adoption of compulsory powers, 93-96
departmental responsibility for, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 54, 56, 57, 78, 84, 85, 90, 170
plans for, in pre-war period, 43, 44, 45, 46, 50, 58, 59
plans for post-war period, 259, 261-263
—See also *Control of Employment Act, Control of Engagement Order, Directions, District Manpower Boards, Essential Work Orders, Labour Supply Committees, Poaching, Ring Fence Schemes, Voluntaryism, policy of, in labour supply*
- Labour, Minister of, 34, 35, 36, 45
—See also *Labour and National Service, Minister of*
- Labour, Ministry of, 11, 15, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 34, 40, 43, 45, 47, 50
—See also *Labour and National Service, Ministry of*
- Labour and National Service, Minister of (Mr. Ernest Bevin),* 87-96, 107, 215, 216, 475-477
aircraft requirements, 207-209
conscription of women, 115
consultation with industry, 221
directions, 109, 117, 118, 121, 122, 136
directions to juveniles, 352
directions to juveniles to coal mines, 360
District Manpower Boards, 302
dock industry, 140
factory medical services, 412-416
incitement to strike, 471
management of hostels, 400
mobilisation of women, 292
payment by results, 430-431
personnel management, 420
prosecution of strikers, 466-467
training, 375
transport, 403
travelling allowances, 406

*References to the Minister of Labour and National Service have been indexed only when they describe his particular point of view and references to the Ministry only when they deal with organisation and allied subjects.

- Labour and National Service, Minister of (Mr. Ernest Bevin), *contd.*
 wages control, 425-426
 welfare, 101, 102-103, 117, 394, 395
 —See also *Labour, Minister of, Voluntaryism, policy of, in labour supply*
- Labour and National Service, Ministry of*
 Director-General of Manpower of, 216, 302, 303
 establishment of, 57
 estimates of labour requirements, 474
 hours of work, 443
 Irish labour, 334-341
 Juvenile Employment Service, 349-352, 367-370
 management of hostels, 400
 mobilisation of women, 292-297
 organisation of, 119-122, 214-225
 Factory and Welfare Department, 394
 International Labour Branch, 345-346
 Parliamentary Secretary of, 268, 270, 443
 Permanent Secretary of, 89, 141
 preference committee, 100
 regional organisation, 57, 91
 —See also *Appointments Service, Central Register, Conciliation, District Manpower Boards, Employment Exchanges, Factory Inspectorate, Labour, control of, Labour, Ministry of, Labour Supply Inspectors, Training, Voluntaryism, policy of, in labour supply*
- Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 141, 168, 170, 174, 219, 446
 Labour Exchanges, in first World War, 14, 15, 17
 —See also *Employment Exchanges*
- Labour in the Munitions Industries
 —See *Inman, P.*
- Labour management, 419-421
 Labour Party, 60, 67, 87
 Labour Priorities
 —See *Priorities, labour*
- Labour requirements, for women workers, 39, 288-292, 308
 —See also *Manpower budgets and under separate industries and Services*
- Labour shortage, general, 116
 —See also *under separate industries and Services*
- Labour Supply Board, 91, 119, 141
 Labour Supply Committees, 91, 92, 120, 220
 Labour Supply Inspectors, 85, 90, 92, 120, 121, 124, 182, 215, 303, 474
 in coal mining industry, 359
- Lace industry, 191
- Lancashire
 apprentices' strike in, 459
 shortage of labour in, 116
- Land Army
 —See *Women's Land Army*
- Land drainage, 111, 345
 Land Forces Committee of the War Cabinet, 62
- Leaving certificates
 in First World War, 3, 4, 11
 proposed by M.A.P., 123
- Less essential industries, 187-190
 allocations for, 226-241 *passim*
 definition of, 175
 labour force in, reduction of, 176
 labour force in, strength of, 197-199
 —See also *Industry: concentration, Industries: non-munitions, Transfer of labour: from less essential to munitions work*
- Light alloys, Irish labour for, 339
 Light industries, 21, 190
 Limitation of Supplies Orders, 118, 130-131, 189
- Liverpool
 dock canteens, 422
 strike, 459
- Local Appeal Boards, 108, 138, 294
 Local Authorities
 and building apprenticeships, 364, 365

- and billeting, 396, 398
- staff, deferment of, 310-312, 316
- staff, juvenile, 355
- Local Education Authorities and Juvenile Employment Service, 349-352, 367-370
- Local Government Board, 15
 - See also *Health, Ministry of*
- Location of industry
 - See *Industry: location*
- Lock-outs, 8, 45, 133-134, 456, 469
- Lodgings, 397-399
 - allowances for, 76, 126
 - charges for, 401
 - for bomb damage repair workers, 251-252
 - for Irish workers, 338
 - See also *Hostels, Housing*
- London, 296
 - aerial attacks, 397
 - dock canteens, 422
 - industrial population, 18, 21
 - Juvenile Employment Service, 351
 - labour turnover, 123
 - reception of transferred workers, 396, 397
 - transfer of building labour to, 248-252
 - transfer of dock labour from, 247
 - unemployment, 24, 26
- Lord Advocate, 467, 469
- Lord President of the Council
 - (Mr. Neville Chamberlain), 93
 - (Sir John Anderson), 107, 213
 - labour requirements of aircraft industry, 174
 - manpower budgeting, 107, 113, 204, 205, 213, 290
 - manpower policy, 113, 163
 - priorities, 208
 - Service requirements, 173-174
 - (Mr. Clement Attlee), 210
- Lord President's Committee
 - coal mining labour requirements, 253
 - hours of work, 445
 - manpower budgeting, 107, 111, 168, 175, 176, 177, 204, 210, 213, 475
- Lord Privy Seal
 - (Sir John Anderson), 52
 - (Mr. Clement Attlee), 94
- Luton, 192
- Lyttelton, Mr. Oliver (later Lord Chandos)
 - See *Production, Minister of, Board of Trade, President of the*
- Lytton, Lord, 312

- Machine tool industry, 182
 - priority, 98
 - shortage of skilled workers, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70
- Machine tools, 103, 375
- Machines, manning of, 462-464
- Malcolm, Mr. (later Sir) Dougal, 350
- Managements
 - See *Industry*
- Manning of machines, 462-464
- Manpower, allocation of, in First World War, 17
 - distribution of, 18, 111-116, 169-170, 199, 210-211, 230, 237, 481-482, 483
- Manpower Boards
 - See *District Manpower Boards*
- Manpower budgets, 106, 212-214
 - departmental responsibility for, 170, 210, 235
 - individual budgets
 - Interdepartmental Committee on Labour Requirements, 62-64, 65, 77, 78, 101
 - Manpower Requirements Committee, 101-105, 109, 135, 160, 282-283

- Manpower budget, individual budgets, *contd.***
 Manpower Survey, October 1941, 109-115, 166, 167
 Spring Survey, 1942, 168-170, 171
 J.W.P.S. Survey, 1942, 171-172
 Autumn Survey, 1942, 174, 175-179, 290
 Midsummer 1943 Revision, 202-206
 later war-time budgets, 210, 211, 226-241 *passim*
 technique of budgeting, 472-473
 —See also *Estimates of labour requirements*
- Manpower Committee of the Production Executive, 109**
Manpower Policy Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 54
Manpower Sub-Committee of Committee of Imperial Defence, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 54, 331
- Marine engineers, registration of, 144**
- Married quarters, 399**
- May, Lord, 409**
- Medical Boards, 152, 493-496**
- Medical examinations, 412**
 in coal mining industry, 361
 of recruits to Armed Forces, 493-496
- Medical Services, Factory, 412-416**
- Medical students, deferment of, 313**
- Merchant Navy**
 programmes, 62, 64
 registration of seamen, 144
 requirements, 227
 welfare in, 422-423
- Merchant Navy Order, 139-140**
- Merseyside**
 dock industry, 140
 employment of West Indians on, 343
- Metal industries**
 —See *Iron and steel, Light alloys*
- Metal manufacture**
 —See *Engineering and allied industries*
- Midlands**
 dilution, 68
 industrial population, 18
 overcrowding of production, 180, 282
 reception and lodgings, 396, 397, 398
 recreational clubs, 408
 shortage of labour, 116, 296
 wages, 83
- Midwives, 415**
- Military Service**
 —See *Armed Forces and under separate Services*
- Military Service Act, 5**
- Military Service Hardship Committees, 157-158**
- Military Service Tribunals, 4**
- Military Training Act, 54, 56, 150, 156**
 medical examinations under, 493-496
 registrations under, 488-490
 —See also *Armed Forces: recruitment*
- Mines Department, 128, 359, 360, 461**
 —See also *Fuel and Power, Ministry of*
- Mining**
 —See *Coal mining, Iron ore mining, Tin mining*
- Minister, Ministry of**
 —See *under operative word, e.g. Production, Minister and Ministry of*
- Mobilisation, peak of, 210-211**
 —See also *Manpower: distribution of*
- Mobility**
 —See *Transfers of labour*
- Moore-Brabazon, Col. (Minister of Aircraft Production), 174**
- Morrison, Mr. W. S. (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster), 54**
- Motor manufacture, 19, 21, 77**
 employment of juveniles in, 355

- Mulberry harbours programme, 242-245
 Munich crisis, 51, 86, 472
 Munitions, Minister of, 8, 10, 11, 12
 Munitions, Ministry of, 2, 4, 6, 12, 15, 17, 26, 393
 Munitions industries
 First World War, 1-17 *passim*
 Second World War
 employment in
 —See *Manpower: distribution of*
 employment in, of Irish labour, 339-341
 employment in, of women, 279-298
 labour requirements and allocations, 62-64, 102, 103, 110, 111, 112, 113, 167,
 168, 177, 226-241 *passim*
 wages, 434
 —See also under *separate industries*
 Munitions of War Act, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12
 Munitions programmes, 38, 61, 63, 65, 168, 171, 172, 178, 226
 coordination of British and American, 178, 226
 —See also *Aircraft programmes, Naval programmes, Supply, Ministry of: programmes*
 'Music While you Work,' 408-409
- National Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment, 350
 National Arbitration Tribunal
 —See *Compulsory Arbitration: Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order*
 Awards of, 430, 458, 459
 National Association of Girls' Clubs, 407-408, 410
 National Council for the Recruitment of Nurses and Midwives, 415
 National Council of Social Service, 395, 407
 National Dock Labour Corporation
 —See *Dock industry*
 National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, 248
 National Fire Service, 162, 165, 196, 249
 National Government Service
 —See *Civil Service*
 National Joint Advisory Council, 80, 81, 95, 96, 109, 133, 143-144, 424, 425, 426, 429
 —See also *Joint Consultative Committee*
 National Service, Department of the Director-General of, 15
 National Service, Minister of, 5, 17
 National Service, Ministry of
 in First World War, 5, 17
 pre-war plans for, 42, 43, 44, 47, 50, 56
 National Service Acts, 55, 86, 150-164, 165, 206, 286-287, 289, 297
 in First World War, 3, 4, 5, 9
 registrations under, 488-490
 results of medical examinations under, 493-496
 —See also *Armed Forces: recruitment to*
 National Service Committees, 52, 53
 National Service Entertainments Board, 409
 National Service Hostels Corporation, 118, 251-252, 400, 402
 —See also *Hostels*
 National Service Officers
 —See *Essential Work Orders*
 'National' work
 —See *Essential Work Orders*
 Naval programmes, 38, 62, 171, 178, 201
 —See also *Merchant Navy*
 Navy, 57
 requirements and allocations, 102, 110, 111, 159, 160, 162, 174, 177, 179, 202-206,
 209, 226-241 *passim*
 strength of, 102, 484
 training for in Government Training Centres, 378, 381
 —See also *Armed Forces, Merchant Navy, Women's Royal Naval Reserve*
 Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (N.A.A.F.I.), 247, 295, 409

- Negotiating machinery
and apprentices, 459-460
and wages, 424-432 *passim*
—See also *Arbitration, Compulsory arbitration, Conciliation, Joint consultation, Strikes*
- Night shifts
—See *Shifts*
- North-West region
overcrowding of production in, 282
reception of transferred workers, 396
recreational clubs, 408
strike, 459
unemployment of juveniles, 356
- Northern Ireland, importation of labour from, 250, 334-341
- Norwegian refugees, 345-347
- Nurses and Midwives (Registration for Employment) Order, 415
- Nursing, industrial, 414-415
- Nursing Appointments Offices, 217
- Nursing Services
—See *Hospitals*
- O'Brien, T. H., *Civil Defence*, 250n
- Option
for other work of men called-up, 186, 187, 246, 253
of women for Services or industry, 286-287, 288, 289, 297
- Order 1305
—See *Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order*
- Overseas Volunteer Scheme, 342
- Paper industry, 149, 191
- Parliament, 431
—See also *House of Commons*
- Parliamentary Secretary to Ministry of Labour
(Mr. R. Assheton), 443
(Mr. George Tomlinson), 268, 270
- Paymaster-General
(Lord Cherwell), 227
(Sir William Jowitt), 258, 259
- Payment by results
—See *Wages*
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, 141
- Personnel management, 419-421
in bus undertakings, 405
- Personnel Management Advisory Service, 421
- Phoenix programme for Mulberry harbours, 243-244
- Physicists
registration, 321
training, 325-330
—See also *Scientific workers*
- Placings
—See *Employment Exchanges*
- Planning
for Second World War, 38-60
—See also *Manpower budgets*
- Poaching, 6, 67, 68, 84, 425
- Police, 165, 196
deferment scheme, 310-312, 316
- Polish refugees, 345-347
- Population, distribution of
—See *Manpower, distribution of*
- Portal, Lord (Minister of Works), 365
- Porter award, 432, 458
- Portfolio, Minister without
(Mr. Arthur Greenwood), 97
(Sir William Jowitt), 273

- Post-war planning, 256-275
- Postan, M. M., *British War Production*, 39n, 166n, 170n, 201n, 221n, 244n
- Pottery industry, 131
concentration of, 181, 194
- Prague, 39, 54
- Pre-war planning, 38-60
- Preference for labour
—*See Priorities, labour*
- President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Oliver Lyttelton), 109
- Pres, deferment scheme, 312, 316
- Prices
control of, 42, 45, 47, 59, 79, 81, 82, 90, 424-437
rises in, 80, 82
subsidiaries on, 82
- Prime Minister
(Mr. Neville Chamberlain), 52, 59, 72, 86, 88, 425
(Mr. Winston Churchill), 94
aircraft programme, 167
appointment of Mr. Bevin, 87, 88
army ceiling, 106, 107, 173, 213
conscription of women, 286
demobilisation, 273
hours of work, 442
manpower budgets, 169, 176, 178, 179, 204, 205, 226-241 *passim*, 290
recruitment to Cadet Corps, 353
- Priorities, general
and regional organisation, 220
priority of production directions, 97-99, 123-124
Production Council to determine, 90
- Priorities, labour
'Bottlenecks', 100, 101
for aircraft production in 1943, 206-210
for machine tool industry, 70
1940 priority instructions, 98-100, 123-124
preference for
bus conductresses, 405
nurses, 415
railways, 246
women workers, 295, 297
preference machinery, 100, 219-220
Regional Boards and, 221
- Prisoners of war, 187, 347-348
- Problems of Social Policy*, by R. M. Titmuss, 398n
- Production, Minister of, 170
(Mr. Oliver Lyttelton), 170, 213, 219
manpower budgets, 174, 179, 204, 227
priorities, 208
- Production, Ministry of, 170-171, 190, 246, 474
designation, 208-209, 220
manpower budgets, 227, 234-235
regional organisation, 221
- Production Council of the War Cabinet, 90, 91, 97, 98, 99, 101, 105, 106, 119, 123, 124, 131, 213, 375, 442, 443, 446
- Production Executive of the War Cabinet, 107, 108, 109, 168, 213, 219, 220, 444
- Productivity of labour, 171, 172, 445
and wages, 429
- Professional workers, 51, 217
deferment of, 159, 312, 315-317
- Profits, control of
First World War, 8, 12
pre-war plans for, 41, 45, 47, 59
Second World War, 79, 81, 90, 91, 94
- Prosecution of
coal mining ballottees, 255
inciters to strike, 466-471
strikers, 461, 462, 464, 466-471

- Radio, priority for, 98, 295**
Radio engineers
 deferment of trainees, 313
 training, 325-330
- Railway undertakings**
 and Essential Work Order, 139
 deferment of workers, 310-311, 316
 Irish workers, 340
 juveniles, 355
 labour requirements for D-Day, 246
 transport of war workers by, 403-406
 wages, 430, 431, 434
- Railway workshops, 184**
- Rationing, 79, 81**
- Raw materials, 70, 71, 103**
 —See also *Limitation of Supplies Order*
- Rearmament, 38-60 passim**
- Reception of transferred workers, 396-397**
- Reconstruction, 234-241, 256-275**
- Reconstruction, Ministry of, 235**
- Recreational facilities, 406-411**
 for seamen, 423
- Redundancy, 261-263**
- Refugees, 344-347**
- Regional organisation**
 Area Boards
 chairmanship, 91, 119
 establishment, 70, 84, 86
 functions, 71, 72, 84, 120, 124
 trade unions and, 67, 71, 72
 Ministry of Labour, 216-217
 Regional Boards, 220-221
- Regional Transport Commissioners, 404**
- Regional Transport Consultative Committees, 404**
- Regions**
 employment according to, 20
 unemployment according to, 498
 —See also *Regional organisation and under separate regions*
- Registration, 94, 104, 108, 109, 136**
 aliens, 345, 346, 347
 boys and girls, 354
 civil defence workers, etc., 196
 coal miners, 128, 185
 disabled persons, 270
 dock industry, 129
 engineers, chemists, etc., 321
 marine engineers, 144
 merchant seamen, 144
 nurses and midwives, 291, 415
 pre-war plans for, 41, 42, 45, 50
 plans for in post-war period, 263
 shipbuilding workers, 144, 185
 skilled engineers, 125
 under Military Training Act, 488-490
- Registration for Employment Order, 143-145, 165, 185, 196, 206, 223, 284-286, 288, 289, 293, 295, 297, 491-492**
- Reinstatement in civilian employment, 55, 260n**
- Relaxation of customs**
 —See *Dilution*
- Releases from Forces**
 —See *Armed Forces*
- Reservation and deferment**
 First World War, 4, 5, 17
 pre-war planning, 41, 42
 Second World War, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 75, 112, 158-160, 165, 299, 314
 and transport services, 246

- in aircraft industry, 206-207
- individual deferments, 163
- number of applicants for, 497
- of bus drivers, 404-405
- of engineers, 327
- of factory doctors, 414
- of shipbuilding workers, 247
- protected work, 108, 145-146, 161
- raising of age of, 113, 160-161, 163
- See also *Armed Forces: releases from, District Manpower Boards*
- Resettlement
 - See *Training*
- Rest homes, 410-411
- Restoration of pre-war practices, 91, 92
- Restriction on Engagement Orders, 122, 127, 128, 129, 136, 263
- Rhineland, 38
- Ring Fence Schemes, 129, 222
- Riveters, training of, 382-383
- Road Haulage Act, 438
- Road Transport
 - See *Transport, road*
- Roadmen, wages of, 431
- Rockets
 - See *Air attacks*
- Rolls-Royce, 458
- Royal Air Force, 38, 57, 159, 409
 - requirements and allocations, 102, 110, 111, 159, 160, 162, 173-174, 177, 179, 202-206, 209, 226-241 *passim*, 326
 - strength of, 102, 484
 - See also *Armed Forces, Women's Royal Air Force*
- Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 349
- Royal Observer Corps, 165
- Royal Ordnance Factories, 194
 - and Essential Work Order, 138
 - hostels, 399, 402
 - hours of work, 443, 444
 - Irish labour, 339
 - labour requirements, 76, 110, 111, 219
 - for women, 183
 - labour shortages, 116
 - priority, 295, 297
 - training, 389, 420
 - travelling allowances, 405
 - wastage, 116
- Royal Society, 319

- Sailors, welfare of merchant, 422-423
- Savings campaign, 82, 83
- Schedule of Protected Occupations
 - See *Reservation: First World War*
- Schedule of Reserved Occupations
 - See *Reservation: Second World War*
- Scheduling of undertakings
 - See *Essential Work Orders*
- Scientific workers, 51, 217, 319-333
 - deferment scheme, 312-313
- Scotland
 - apprentices strike, 459-460
 - industrial population, 18
 - Juvenile Employment Service, 350-351, 369
 - reception of dock workers, 396
 - strikes, 467, 469
 - transfer of women from, 288, 296
 - unemployment, 24-25
 - of juveniles, 356

- Scotland, Department of Education for, 27, 330n, 369, 379, 386
 Scotland, Secretary of State for, 30, 413
 Scrap metal industry, 129
 Seamen's Welfare, 422-423
 Seamen's Welfare Advisory Board, 423
 Secretaries of State
 —*See under operative word, e.g., Air, Secretary of State for*
 Select Committee on National Expenditure, 380, 404, 420, 443, 444
 Shawcross, Mr. (later Sir) Hartley, 439
 Sheet metal workers, strike of, 468-469
 Shifts, double and treble, 76, 399, 401, 434, 442-444
 Government Training Centres, 375
 machine tool industry, 69
 Shipbuilding and repairing industry, 19, 20, 98, 184-185, 201
 deferment scheme, 310-311, 316
 Essential Work Order, 139
 hours of work, 442
 Industrial Registration Order, 144
 labour requirements, 63, 64, 110
 for D-Day, 247-248
 Ring Fence Scheme, 130
 shortage of skilled labour, 75
 strikes, 462-464, 467
 of apprentices, 459-460, 465-466
 training, 382-383
 wages, 430
 —*See also Naval programmes*
 Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, 382, 462, 463
 Shipping, 129, 140, 428
 Shipping Federation, 139
 Simon, Sir John
 —*See Exchequer, Chancellor of*
 Skilled labour
 —*See Armed Forces, Army, Dilution, Engineering and allied industries, Poaching, Shipbuilding and repairing industry, Training, Transfer of labour, Wages*
 Soft drinks industry, 192-194
 Southampton, transfer of dock workers to, 247
 Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act, 30
 Stabilisation
 —*See Prices*
 Stage, deferment scheme for, 312
 Stamp, Lord, 59, 64, 65, 80, 81, 84, 85
 State bursaries, 326, 327, 328-329
 Statistics, collection of, 65, 473
 Strikes
 First World War, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10
 between the wars, 22
 Second World War, 455-471, 475
 and wages, 143, 437
 number of, 504-505
 —*See also Arbitration, Compulsory arbitration, Conciliation, Disputes, Industrial relations*
Studies in the Social Services, by S. M. Ferguson and H. Fitzgerald, 292n
 Sub-Committee on Preferences in the Allocation of Labour, 100, 219-220
 Sub-Committee on the Control of Manpower, 49, 51, 52, 54
 Sub-contracting, 64, 70, 180-181
 Subsidies, 426, 428, 432
 Sunday work, 443-444
 —*See also Hours of Work, Shifts*
 Supervisory staff, 387-388
 Supplementary Register to Central Register, 320, 322-323
 Supply, Minister of, 444
 Supply, Ministry of, 62, 81, 130, 208
 concentration, 147
 hostels, 400-402
 hours of work, 445
 housing, 399

- labour requirements and allocations, 168, 169, 179, 200-201, 202-206, 209, 226-241
passim
 location of contracts, 131
 Mulberry harbours, 243, 244
 plans to establish, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 57, 58, 318n, 474
 priority of production, 97
 programmes, 105, 179, 201
 recruitment of Irish labour, 339, 340
 releases of labour for aircraft work, 207
 training, 420
 travelling allowances, 405
 welfare, 393
 —See also *Regional organisation*
- Supply departments
 hours of work, 440-447
 labour estimates, 473, 474
 location of industry, 474
 —See also *under individual departments*
- Survey of Economic and Financial Plans, 64
- Surveyors, registration of, 321
- Suspension of workers
 —See *Discipline*
- Tanks**
 priorities for, 98, 295
 programme, 201
- Teachers, deferment of, 312
- Technical Colleges
 —See *Joint Recruiting Boards, Training*
- Technical personnel, 217, 319-333
 deferment scheme, 312-313
- Technical Personnel Committee, 326-327, 329
- 'Ten-year hypothesis', 38
- Textiles, 112, 130, 355
- Timber production
 labour requirements, 110, 111
 employment of Canadians, 342
 employment of prisoners of war, 347-348
- Time rates
 —See *Wages*
- Times, The*, 427, 431
- Tin mines, 186, 187
- Titmuss, R. M., *Problems of Social Policy*, 398n
- Tomlinson, Mr. George (Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour), 268, 270
- Trade, Board of, 14, 15, 72, 119, 240
 concentration, 146-149, 189-195
 Limitation of Supplies Order, 118, 130-131
 President of (Mr. Oliver Lyttelton), 109
- Trade Boards, 33, 34, 35, 36, 437-440
- Trade Boards Act, 437, 438, 440
- Trade Card Agreement, 4
- Trade Disputes Act, 88, 466
- Trade Practices, 451-452
- Trade Unions
 First World War, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
 Second World War, 96
 hours of work, 444
 mistrust of government policy, 67, 68, 70, 86, 88
 wages, 78-84, 424-437 *passim*
 —See also *Compulsory arbitration: Conditions of Employment Order, Industrial relations, Joint consultation, Strikes*
- Trade Union Congress, 58, 59, 60, 78, 88, 143, 429, 440, 446

- Training**, 26, 64, 95, 103, 116, 126, 372-391
 apprentices and juveniles, 27, 36, 39, 266, 356, 357, 361-365
 by firms, 92, 372-378 *passim*, 387-388
 in Government Training Centres, 26, 27, 30, 31, 76, 92, 135, 372-391 *passim*, 401
 coal miners, 255
 disabled, 267-270
 Indians, 343
 juveniles, 266, 356, 357
 shipbuilding workers, 185
 West Indians, 342-343
 women, 285
 Instructional Centres, 31
 personnel managers, 420, 421
 resettlement schemes, 263-266
 advice on, 270-272
 for disabled persons, 267-270
 scientists and technicians, 325-330
 soldiers, 153
 Technical Colleges, 92, 264-265, 266, 327-330
 'Training within Industry' (T.W.I.), 387-388
Transfer of labour, 13, 14, 17, 28, 29, 58, 65, 91, 92, 118, 132, 262, 473, 475, 476
 and wages, 425
 bomb damage repair workers, 248-252
 dock labour, 247
 from less essential to munitions work, 69, 74, 75, 103, 116, 130, 135-136, 145-146,
 167, 169, 182, 197-198, 206, 376
 juveniles, 356, 357
 reception of transferred workers, 396-397
 shiprepairing workers, 247-248
 skilled workers, 116, 123-124, 125, 126
 women, 183, 279-293 *passim*
 —See also *District Manpower Boards, Essential Work Orders, Hostels, Housing, Industry: concentration of, Labour Supply Inspectors, Lodgings*
- Transport**, 104, 129
 Irish labour for, 340
 labour requirements, 227
 for D-Day, 245-247
 priority for, 295
 road, 139
 for war workers, 403-406
 training, 383-384
 wages, 435
 subsidy, 428
 —See also *Bus services, Railway undertakings, War Transport, Minister and Ministry of*
- Transport and General Workers' Union**, 79, 87, 244
 —See also *Bevin, Mr. Ernest*
- Transport Consultative Committees**, Regional, 404
- Travelling allowances**, 76, 126
- Trawler fleet**, requisitioning of, 88
- Treasury**, 319, 400, 430
 —See also *Exchequer, Chancellor of*
- Treasury Agreement**, 8, 10, 12
- Treble shifts**
 —See *Shifts*
- Tribunals**, proposed to deal with deferment, 300
 —See also *Appeals Tribunals*
- Trotskyite Movement**, 465-466, 470-471
- Trustram Eve**, Sir Malcolm, 249, 252, 362
- Turnover**
 —See *Wastage*
- Tyneside**
 strike of apprentices, 465-466
 strike of boilermakers, 462-464
 strike of dockers, 468
- Tyneside Apprentices Guild**, 465

- U-Boat attacks, 178
- Unemployment
- between the Wars, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28-31, 140, 350, 395
 - in Second World War, 62, 72, 73, 112, 114, 115, 130-131, 132, 135, 146
 - among juveniles, 356, 357
 - among women, 281
 - in coal mining, 128
 - in Eire, 335, 336-337
 - numbers unemployed, 481-483, 498
 - plans for avoidance of in post-war period, 257-258
 - training of unemployed in Government Training Centres, 373-374, 375-376, 377
- Unemployment Insurance, 28, 56, 350
- Uniformity Agreement in building industry, 126
- United Boilermakers' and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders' Society, 462
- United States, 22, 36
 - Bolero scheme, 173
 - call-up of citizens, 347
 - entry of into war, 166
 - joint programme planning, 170-171, 178, 226, 235-236
- Universities
 - deferment of undergraduates, 313-314, 328
 - grants for further education, 264-265
 - placing of graduates, 322, 323-324
 - training of personnel managers, 421
 - training of scientists and technicians, 325-330
 - transfer of staff to war work, 318n, 319
 - See also *Joint Recruiting Boards*
- Upgrading
 - See *Dilution*
- V bombs
 - See *Air Attacks*
- Vacancies notified to Employment Exchanges, 29, 72, 308
 - See also *Employment Exchanges*
- V.E. Day, 234
- Vetting of vacancies, 308
- Vickers-Armstrong, 458, 462-464
- Vocational guidance
 - See *Juvenile Employment Services*
- Voluntary organisations
 - clubs for war workers, 406-408
 - reception of war workers, 396, 397
 - welfare of seamen, 423
 - welfare of war workers, 395
- Voluntaryism, policy of, in labour supply, 46, 50, 66, 67, 68, 72, 76n, 78, 84, 85, 93, 94, 117, 119, 136, 476
- Volunteer Drivers' Register, 246
- Volunteers
 - See *Armed Forces: recruitment, Conscription*
- Wages, 7, 41, 43, 72, 108, 129, 424-440
 - agriculture, 129
 - building industry, 362-363
 - bus services, 405, 458
 - catering industry, 419
 - coal mining, 360, 458, 460-462
 - control
 - First World War, 8, 10, 11, 13
 - pre-war plans for, 45, 47, 48, 50, 58, 59
 - Second World War, 78-84, 95, 117, 133, 137-143
 - disputes, 457
 - dock industry, 140

Wages, *contd.*

- engineering industry, 6, 458
 - apprentices, 459-460
- Government Training Centres, 377
- index of weekly rates, 502
- Merchant Navy, 139-140
- payment by results
 - high bonuses in Midlands, 83
 - in First World War, 11
 - of sheet metal workers, 468
- time rates, discontent with, 11, 68, 69
 - See also Compulsory Arbitration: Conditions of Employment Order, Earnings, Poaching*
- Wages Councils, 437-440
- Wales, South
 - industrial population, 18
 - strikes, 8, 458
 - transport, 404
 - unemployment, 24, 26
- War, hypotheses about ending of, 226-241 *passim*
- War, Secretary of State for, 106, 173, 238, 283, 378
- War Cabinet, 62, 63, 64, 71, 167, 212-214
 - apprentices' strike, 466
 - Civil Defence Services, 195, 196
 - demobilisation plans, 259, 273-274
 - employment of prisoners of war, 347-348
 - holidays, 446
 - hostels, 400
 - manpower budgets, 105, 109, 113, 175, 176, 177, 179, 200, 204, 205, 210, 226-241
 - passim*, 473
 - manpower policy, 78, 86, 94, 108, 113, 124, 163, 206-207, 299
 - size of Army, 105, 106
 - training, 343, 374-375, 382
 - wages, 426, 439
 - See also Defence Committee, Economic Policy Committee, Production Council, Production Executive*
- War Cabinet Offices, 227
- War Office, 16, 17, 49, 151, 156, 179, 213, 409
 - army ceiling, 106, 107, 173
 - engineering cadetships, 330
 - Joint Recruiting Boards, 332, 333
 - training in Government Training Centres, 374, 380
 - use of skilled labour, 154
- War Service badges, 2
- War Transport, Minister of, 403
- War Transport, Ministry of, 140, 383, 404, 447
- Wastage, 118, 123, 403
 - agriculture, 128-129
 - building, 127
 - bus conductresses, 405
 - coalmines, 128
 - Government Training Centres, 389
 - Royal Ordnance Factories, 116
 - Women's Auxiliary Services, 283-284
 - workers transferred to Midlands, 396-397
- Waverley, Lord
 - See Anderson, Sir John*
- Welders, training of, 378, 383
- Welfare, 95, 101, 103, 121, 129, 392-423
 - and Essential Work Order, 108, 118
 - building workers, 127, 362-363
 - bus conductresses, 405
 - Irish workers, 338
 - West Indian workers, 343
 - women workers, 288, 298
 - See also Conditions of Work*
- Welfare supervisors, 419-421
- West Indies, importation of labour from, 342-343

- Whale programme for Mulberry harbours, 244-245
 White papers
 —*See under subjects concerned*
 Whitley Committee, 32, 33
 —*See also Joint Industrial Councils*
 Wireless
 —*See Radio*
 Wireless Personnel Committee, 325, 326
 Wolfe, Mr. Humbert, 62-64, 65
 Women workers, 13, 78, 113, 116, 129, 182, 183, 185, 189, 197-199, 279-298, 404-405
 Control of Engagement Order, 166, 183, 194, 263, 415, 476
 hours of work, 441-445
 Irish, 339, 341
 part-time, 170, 182
 requirements for, 101, 103, 105, 178
 training, 31, 376-377, 381, 386, 387, 391
 wages, 435, 436, 458
 —*See also Manpower; distribution of, Registration for Employment Order*
 Women's Auxiliary Services, 279-298 *passim*
 conscription to, 112, 113, 115, 155n, 163, 206, 476
 strength of, 114, 115, 197-199
 Women's Consultative Committee, 288, 291, 293-294, 420, 476
 Women's Land Army, 110, 162, 295
 Women's Royal Air Force, 177
 Women's Royal Naval Service, 177, 381
 —*See also Women's Auxiliary Services*
 Women's Technical Service Register, 323n
 Women's Voluntary Services (W.V.S.), 397
 Wood, Sir Kingsley
 —*See Eschequer, Chancellor of*
 Wool industry, 149, 191, 431
 Woolton, Lord (Minister of Food), 417-418
 Works, Minister of (Lord Portal), 365
 Works, Ministry of, 91, 127
 hostels, 401
 repair of bomb damage, 248-252
 training, 362, 364
 Works and Buildings, by C. M. Kohan, 362n
 Works and Buildings Priority Sub-Committee, 91

 Young persons
 —*See Juveniles*
 Young Men's Christian Association, 407
 Young Women's Christian Association, 407, 408n
 Youth organisations, 354, 406
 Youth registration, 406

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