# CHAPTER XV

# MANPOWER

## (i)

## Manpower Budgeting

It has already become a commonplace of history that the United Kingdom's war effort was stretched practically to the extreme limits that its economy could sustain. But what in the end determined these limits? What factor in the economy finally became a barrier to any further expansions in the numbers of fighting men that could be raised, equipped and maintained? As we have seen, the high pitch of the United Kingdom's mobilisation owed much to help from the Dominions and the United States. This external aid, however, was regarded not as a reason for any slackening of British efforts but as an opportunity for pushing more and more British resources into the most direct forms of war-making. In studying the ultimate constrictions on the size of the United Kingdom's war effort, we can, therefore, take for granted the international division of effort.

The limitations on the expansion of the war sector of the British economy varied of course according to the different stages of the war. In the early years, there was no single all-pervading shortage in the war economy. For many months, as the Service and supply departments pushed ahead with their ambitious programmes, they stumbled upon one obstacle after another. Skilled labour, machine tools, extrusion presses, drop forgings, the right type of steel, the building of factory extensions—a succession of these special difficulties hampered production. But all of them could be overcome by time, skill and organising ability. Given these precious commodities, the ultimate size of the United Kingdom's war effort depended upon its ability to import and its ability to find an ever increasing number of men and women for the Forces and war industry. As we have seen, the continual fears that imports might be insufficient to support the war effort were not realised. In the end the limits to the expansion of the United Kingdom's war economy were set neither by shipping, nor port capacity nor foreign exchange but by manpower. It was lack of manpower that made it impossible to increase the total size of the Forces and munitions industries reached in the summer of 1943 or even to keep them at that level.

At the time of Pearl Harbour, manpower had not yet become the most intractable of shortages. As we now know, the Army and Air Force were, in December 1941, at eighty-four and eighty-one per cent. respectively of their final war strengths;[1] the Navy was only at fifty-three per cent. Moreover the demands of the munitions industries would clearly continue to rise for some time. But although the manpower shortage was destined to become very much worse, it was by the end of 1941 already severe. The increasing stringency in that year had led to several important developments in the progress towards a system of manpower budgeting. First, in the early spring, the Prime Minister had fixed a ceiling for the Army, and then, in the summer, the War Cabinet had called for a comprehensive manpower review.[2] By that time, the poverty of information for estimating labour supplies had been mitigated; in consequence, it was found possible to prepare for consideration by the War Cabinet a careful balance sheet of the demands for labour and the prospective supplies. Individual demands were not seriously questioned and the War Cabinet's chief concern was to approve the policies that would bring forward the additional two million or so men and women who were needed. The procedure that had been followed—that is, after the July count of unemployment insurance books, to prepare a grand survey of labour demands and supplies upon which the Government could formulate its manpower policy—became the basis of later manpower budgeting. But, at the end of 1941, it was not yet firmly established.

The War Cabinet's manpower discussions in the last months of 1941 had scarcely ended when the figures in them were completely upset by Pearl Harbour and the revolution in the scale and nature of the war. It was necessary to disentangle, from the strategy approved at the Anglo-American conferences, the British share of responsibility. This in turn had to be translated into Orders of Battle and, ultimately, production programmes. We have already seen that these big questions were not settled until late in 1942. Immediate strategic plans were uncertain until the late summer and the British share of the United States' munitions production was not agreed until still later.[3]

So long as the general background remained so unsettled, labour supplies and demands were necessarily uncertain. On the supply side, there were doubts about the numbers of fit men who could be found for the Services and munitions industries. For example: at the end of 1941 the Government had marked down the building and

[1] This excludes the artificial inflation of figures caused by the return of prisoners of war in the spring and summer of 1945.

[2] See Chapter XI, Section (i).

[3] See Chapter XIII.

civil engineering industries as a rich source of such men; but, in 1942, the plans for bringing great numbers of American troops to the British Isles clearly meant that most of the men who might have gone from these industries into the Army would be needed instead to work in camps and airfields for the United States Forces. Demands were afflicted by uncertainty even more strongly. Throughout the first months of 1942, ministers were faced with a succession of specific and urgent claims which, in the absence of a reliable manpower budget, had to be settled piecemeal. Four problems became particularly acute. Further pressing demands for recruits came from the Services, especially from the Army. The shipbuilding programme was in difficulties. So was the aircraft programme. And there was a crisis in coal production.

It was not the new dimensions of the war that caused the coal crisis. This problem of the domestic front simply happened to come to the fore at a particularly unfortunate time. Many factors contributed to the alarming discrepancy that appeared in the spring of 1942 between prospective coal supplies and demands and there was no single method of balancing the coal budget.[1] But one thing was clear; there seemed no hope of achieving a balance unless more miners were recruited for the pits. The figures put before the War Cabinet suggested that it was necessary to increase the labour force of the mines to 720,000 by finding immediately 15,000 active coal-face workers. The Government agreed that miners should be withdrawn from key industries that had been safeguarded during previous combings, and also that coal-face workers serving in Army rearward formations at home should return to the mines. These measures, however, would still leave the mines short of 7,000 men who could only be found by raiding the Army field force units at home. The War Cabinet felt unable to take a step so grave, for it would derange the solidarity of the Army; it preferred to revise the production and consumption sides of the coal budget and if necessary to run the risk of a coal shortage.

Soon after the discussion about coal, pressing demands came forward for more labour in the shipyards. The heavy strain on the Navy had led the War Cabinet in April 1942 to approve a large programme of new naval construction. But in May, the whole naval programme was falling badly into arrears. The Admiralty protested that this failure was largely due to lack of labour, that the volume of labour in shipbuilding and repairs had risen by a very small proportion in the context of the total rise in war production, and that the shipyards and marine engineering shops must be granted forthwith 34,000 more men, forty per cent. of them skilled. The Ministry of

[1] See below, Chapter XVI, Section (ii).

Labour, however, felt strongly that, even after two years' insistent pressure, the shipbuilding industry still did not know how to make the best use of its labour. This argument was stilled by an independent inquiry by the Ministry of Production into shipyard labour. Meanwhile, the Defence Committee of the War Cabinet agreed that the shipyards ought to be helped by the return of some 2,700 skilled men who had registered as shipbuilding workers in 1941 but had not been transferred because of the importance of their present employment. The unskilled labour demands were to be dealt with by the normal preference machinery.[1]

The labour demands of the aircraft industry were even more difficult to plan than the shipbuilding demands. At the big Anglo-American conferences on strategy, the importance of air attack on Germany was always stressed. The maximum British and American output of aircraft would be necessary in order to make the bombardment as heavy as possible. The Defence Committee watched anxiously the output of British aircraft and from time to time felt some dissatisfaction about it. Why was output not hitting the targets? This question was the source of much misunderstanding during 1942 between the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Aircraft Production would insist that its inability to fulfil its programmes should be measured by the deficit between its estimated labour requirements and the actual intake of labour. The Ministry of Labour would reply not only that the Ministry of Aircraft Production was still using its labour inefficiently but that in any case it was receiving all the labour it could physically use. Estimated requirements could not, the Ministry of Labour said, be faithfully followed. What firm could estimate its needs accurately even for three months ahead, when production was subject to the hazards of enemy action, shortages of raw materials and tools, modifications in design and changes between types?

This controversy appeared all too frequently in ministerial discussions and at length, in the summer of 1942, the Lord President and the Minister of Production undertook to inquire themselves into the labour requirements of the aircraft industry and the methods of estimating them. This inquiry was unable to reconcile the sharply divergent views about the degree to which lack of labour was retarding the aircraft programme. It did, however, establish the fact that individual employers' estimates of labour requirements, even when vetted by government departments, were unreliable. But although these estimates were most uncertain as a measure of labour shortages, they were indispensable as a broad guide to manpower policy. It was necessary therefore to produce some estimate of requirements for the

[1] See p. 303 above and p. 463 below.

last half of 1942 and it was agreed that the aircraft industry in this period would need another 208,000 men and women. But by now it was October and the Ministry of Labour refused to be drawn into any forecasts of how these numbers would be supplied before the annual manpower survey was ready. The War Cabinet agreed that the Ministry should, instead, concentrate on meeting the urgent labour needs of particular factories.

The fourth and perhaps the most important of the manpower demands that troubled the Government during the uncertain months of 1942 concerned recruits for the Services. By the summer of 1942 the Army had reached its authorised manpower ceiling. But by then, the changes in the character of the war had made the ceiling too low. There had been severe losses in the Far East, the African campaign was developing greatly, more soldiers were needed in India, 'tails' had to be provided for the additional divisions going overseas and finally there was now the prospect of entering the Continent of Europe with heavy casualties and with the troops operating perhaps in 'an administrative desert'. The Lord President was asked to examine these demands. In September he was just on the point of recommending that the Army ceiling should be advanced by about 100,000 men and that there should be more elasticity in the interpretation of the ceiling, when the War Office put forward big new demands. Largely on account of the plans to invade N.W. Africa, the Army needed another quarter of a million men between September 1942 and April 1943. This was in itself a severe shock and a week later came more bad news. The R.A.F. asked for 120,000 more men above the figure sanctioned for 1942.

Already a strong committee of the War Cabinet had been appointed to examine Service establishments with a view to reducing the number of non-combatants. When the new demands came in, the Prime Minister himself issued some more forceful injunctions to the Services. 'I must make it clear,' he said, 'that those who do not try to make both ends meet and to save at every point are not helping the war effort of the country.' He ordered searching inquiries into wastage scales, into the increases of R.A.F. ground staff, and into airfield defence. Moreover, he pointed out that disappointments in the supply of aircraft would cut the R.A.F.'s new demands by fifty per cent. After much work by officials and ministers, a final agreement was reached. The Services were to receive, over the last six months of 1942, 59,000 more men than had previously been sanctioned. These numbers were to be obtained by a variety of means. The call-up age was to be reduced from 18½ to 18. Some of the men in the building trade who had been deferred to help with 'Bolero'[1] were to be called

[1] This was the code name for the movement of American troops to the United Kingdom.

up. Some of the R.A.F. mechanics loaned to the aircraft industry were to be recalled, and the R.A.F. was to draw on its Deferred Service List.[1]

The difficult discussions about Service intakes lasted well into the autumn. By then, the disadvantages of dealing with a succession of short term problems without a clear picture of the general manpower position had become only too apparent. The completion of the new manpower survey was awaited with eagerness and impatience. Preliminary attempts that had been made during 1942 to survey the manpower position as a whole had not been very successful. The attempts had been initiated not by the Ministry of Labour but by the Joint War Production Staff, which had been established in March 1942 under the aegis of the Minister of Production in order to provide a link between strategy and production and to serve as a kind of Chiefs of Staff Committee on the production front. The J.W.P.S. was led by its researches to conclude, in the autumn of 1942, that forthcoming Service and supply demands for labour could not possibly be fulfilled. It suggested that definite ceilings would have to be fixed not only for the Services but also for the munitions industries. These conclusions were to be proved right; but it was difficult at the time to put much faith in them, since they were based on very uncertain figures. In any case, it was a wasteful duplication of effort to have more than one official attempt at a general manpower survey. Any uncertainties about the division of responsibility for manpower budgeting between the Ministry of Production and Ministry of Labour were finally banished by the appearance, in October, of the full-scale manpower survey made after the July count of unemployment insurance books. The initiative in handling the survey lay with the Ministry of Labour.

The 1942 manpower survey made it clear that previous methods of budgeting were out of date. Hitherto, it had been possible to formulate the demands of the Services and munitions industries and then invite the Ministry of Labour to find the necessary supplies. But now, in 1942, the additional men and women needed to meet the new demands and at the same time maintain necessary civilian standards, simply did not exist.

Once more, the task of focusing these crucial issues for the War Cabinet fell upon Sir John Anderson. In the mass of preliminary work, procedure was dictated by the acute scarcity of labour; it was necessary first to estimate supplies and then consider where demands should be cut to fit supplies. Since the year 1942 was nearing its end, the period under review was extended to the eighteen months from July 1942 to December 1943.

[1] The purpose of this list had been to insure the R.A.F. against a possible shortage of men for aircrews.

A first investigation suggested that in this period there might be a maximum net supply of 1,867,000 men and women. After allowing for the complex movements between the Services, munitions and other industries, the main ultimate sources of this supply would be the equivalent of half a million full time women from the 'non-industrial' population and 900,000 men and women from the Group III industries[1] which were still at that time known as 'less essential'. But an examination proved that withdrawals from all industries on such a scale would mean a fall in civilian standards that could not be recommended to the War Cabinet. It was increasingly unreal to talk about 'less essential' industries when this group included, for example, cotton spinning, leather manufacture and home-grown timber, when many of the industries had a considerable proportion of their labour on government work and when exports were mostly restricted to supplies essential for sustaining Empire and Allied countries. Some specifically 'civilian' industries in the group, such as distribution and industrial assurance, could be compressed much further; but others, such as pottery and laundries, were already in severe difficulties. It was therefore concluded that unless the Government was ready for major changes in civilian standards, export policy, or Service requirements, Group III as a whole could not yield more than half a million workers. Consequently, in addition to the recruitment from the non-industrial population and from Group III, a special contribution would have to be exacted from the building industry and from certain Group II industries. There must also be a comb out of government services, Civil Defence, prisoners of war, and rejects from the Forces. All these supplies, added together, came to 1·6 million men and women.

The Lord President and his officials examined the demands for labour, no less than the supplies. It seemed that the Services' demands were well in accord with their strategic commitments. The Army's requirements were based on a recent directive by the Minister of Defence about its layout and strength during 1943.[2] The Navy's figure was the minimum requirement for manning new construction and meeting such demands as those of Combined Operations. The R.A.F.'s figure represented the numbers needed to fill deficiencies in establishments, to achieve the approved expansion programme and to replace wastage. Finally, the demands of the munition industries seemed to have been worked out as carefully as possible and to have taken account of limitations other than manpower and of the increasing efficiency of labour.

[1] Or rather, all the Group III industries except building which was considered separately.

[2] This directive stated that the Army's strength should be built up to the equivalent of 100 divisions (including Dominion and Colonial troops and Allied Forces attached to the British army). This figure is not comparable with the fifty-five divisions planned earlier in the war (see p. 288 above). The fifty-five divisions referred to the field army; moreover the concept of divisional strength is quite different in the two cases.

Following all this preliminary investigation, the Lord President put before the War Cabinet the following picture of total demand and supply for the eighteen months ending December 1943.

| | Demands | | | Supply | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Men | Women | Total | Men | Women | Total |
| Services . . | 1,301,000 | 303,000 | 1,604,000 | 700,000 | 220,000 | 920,000 |
| Industry . . | 250,000 | 835,000 | 1,085,000 | 250,000 | 430,000 | 680,000 |
| Total . . | 1,551,000 | 1,138,000 | 2,689,000 | 950,000 | 650,000 | 1,600,000 |

The gap of more than a million that these figures disclosed was too large to be closed by the familiar process of trimming demand and stretching supplies. Moreover, two thirds of the total deficiency arose in the armed forces whose needs could be met only by fit men of military age, and limited classes of women. The country's manpower resources simply did not match its present programmes. It was impossible to meet the essential needs of the Navy, build up an Army equivalent to 100 divisions and expand the R.A.F. to over 600 operational squadrons. Now that the United States had entered the war, Britain would have to supply from home resources—so it then seemed —much of the equipment she had hoped to draw from America; this would mean that manpower the Government had once hoped to earmark for the expansion of the Services would have to be kept in the munitions industries. The only solution was to make substantial cuts in the programmes of the Forces.

The Prime Minister himself made the proposals for reductions. He was inclined to think that the possibilities of supply had been overrated and that the health and efficiency of the people would be damaged by any new stresses. The hopes of the Services must therefore be clipped; from this conclusion there was no escape. As far as the Navy was concerned, Mr. Churchill said, the greatest peril was submarine attack. The highest priority must therefore be given to anti-submarine vessels and weapons, at the cost of delay to other parts of the Navy's programme. The Army should be able to reach its required strength by more drastic pruning of rearward formations and by absorbing men from Civil Defence, the static defences and Air Defence of Great Britain, all of which could be reduced now that invasion and heavy air attacks were less likely. The demands of the R.A.F. and the Ministry of Aircraft Production were to be governed by the importance of increasing the output of aircraft rather than the numbers of officers and airmen. In making reductions it was imperative that the supply requirements of the Services should not exceed real needs; at the moment the requirements in some cases seemed

absurdly high.[1] The Prime Minister was well aware that the reductions he suggested would mean hardships, but he asked his colleagues to apply them 'with the best housekeeping ingenuity' and to keep as much as possible of the offensive power of the Services.

The hardships of the cuts proposed by the Prime Minister were only too apparent. The Army cut might mean a reduction of four divisions on its planned strength.[2] The R.A.F.'s programme would fall by about fifty-seven squadrons during 1943 and by about eighty-nine in mid-1944. In addition, the Ministry of Aircraft Production cut would lose fourteen heavy bomber squadrons by the end of 1943 and nineteen by mid-1944. It was doubted whether the Admiralty, even when it devoted an increased proportion of its total resources to the war against the U-boats, would be able to wage that war with full efficiency. Finally, if there were in fact heavy air attacks, the emasculated Civil Defence Service might be inadequate to prevent fires from burning themselves out, and to rescue trapped casualties.

These objections were all considered, but no satisfactory alternative cuts were found and the Prime Minister's proposals were broadly accepted. The detailed adjustments between the related Service and supply programmes were left to be decided within the Admiralty, between the Army and the Ministry of Supply, and between the R.A.F. and Ministry of Aircraft Production. In December 1942 the allocations for the eighteen months were completed as follows.[3]

Thousands of men and women

| | Original Demands | Cut Imposed | Allocation Authorised[4] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Navy | 323 | 75 | +434 |
| Shipbuilding | 186 | | |
| Army | 809 | 380 | +351 |
| M.o.Supply | 148 | 226 | |
| R.A.F. | 472 | 225 | +750 |
| M.A.P. | 603 | 100 | |
| Civil Defence | — | 75 | − 75 |
| Miscellaneous | 135 | 19 | +116 |
| | 2,676 | 1,100 | 1,576 |

The 1942 manpower budget had several notable features. The most important was that, for the first time, all the sections of the economy had been taken into account, even though the names of

[1] One example quoted by the Prime Minister was 3·7 anti-aircraft ammunition. Existing stocks were, at the highest rate of expenditure in the 1940 blitz, equivalent to fifty months' supply, yet planned production was enormous.

[2] See footnote on p. 444.

[3] In November 1942 just before the final allocation, the Minister of Production returned from America with a guarantee that the essential munitions requirements of the United Kingdom would be met. (p. 400 above.)

[4] i.e. increase or decrease over labour force on 30th June 1942.

the government departments with negative allocations did not yet appear on the balance sheet. Subject to detailed adjustments between each Service department and its supplying department, there were now authorised maximum entitlements for the labour force of each Service and supplying department.

Moreover, the budget marked a significant stage in the mobilisation of the economy. The army was believed to have received the major part of its capital equipment; in consequence the Ministry of Supply's labour force was henceforward to contract. On the other hand, it was necessary for the first time to make a positive allocation to certain civilian industries and services outside the munitions field.

At the end of 1942, allocations had been necessary for as much as eighteen months ahead in order to survey the dimensions of war programmes against a realistic background and in order to formulate manpower policy clearly. But eighteen months was a long period when strategic plans were moving swiftly, and in the spring of 1943 the Government felt it was necessary to review progress. The Ministry of Labour therefore produced an interim survey. In some ways, the progress that had been made was very good; the total intake into the Forces plus the net increase in munitions and other war work during the first half of the eighteen months period had been well ahead of schedule. Unfortunately, this review of total figures masked important individual discrepancies between the original allocations and actual events. Owing to the time lag in making production changes, the Ministry of Supply's labour force had gone up instead of down. There had been a net increase of 130,000 workers in industries and services for which the Cabinet had made no allocation. More disquieting still was the fact that the Ministry of Aircraft Production had been receiving far less labour than its entitlement.

It would not have been too difficult, during the last nine months of 1943, to set right these divergences from the original plans. But the plans themselves proved unstable. The three Services and the merchant navy came forward with big further demands. The change from a defensive to an offensive war was proving expensive in manpower, and the Services were emphatic that they could not fulfil the operations now being planned with the manpower allocations granted in 1942. Nevertheless, the total demands the Services put forward—about 375,000 men and women above their allocations for the last nine months of 1943—bore little relation to manpower realities. Indeed, in the summer of 1943 it became apparent that Great Britain had reached the limits of mobilisation; during the rest of the year recruitment from the non-industrial population would not be sufficient to offset the normal wastage from industry. Before long the labour force would decline. In any case, supplies of labour in the last nine months of 1943 would be less than had been expected.

The demands of the Services and industry for the last nine months of 1943 added up to 912,000 men and women; the prospective supply was 429,000. Once more ruthless cuts would have to be imposed. The Service demands could not possibly be met in full; but the three Ministers concerned proved their case that some increase in their allocations was necessary. In addition, the Group II industries claimed more attention; it was agreed that this Group should receive a definite allocation to be divided out amongst the various industries by the Lord President. It remained to find the men and women to meet the approved demands. At this stage it became clear that the original 1942 demands of the two biggest supply departments—the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Aircraft Production—had been greatly exaggerated. The Ministry of Supply, it was now agreed, must release much more labour than had originally been planned. The Ministry of Aircraft Production could be expected to fulfil its programmes with considerably fewer men and women than the extra half million which had been allocated to it for the period from July 1942 to December 1943.

The Ministry of Aircraft Production's demands could be cut; but after they had been cut it was essential that they should be met. This was the salient conclusion of the manpower discussions of mid-1943: the real absorptive capacity of the aircraft industry, once it was determined, must be satisfied. In the previous months, the net increase of labour in the aircraft factories had not been sufficient even for the new 'realistic' aircraft programme approved in January 1943. According to the Prime Minister, the greatest shortcoming threatening the war effort was this falling off in the planned supply of aircraft. Somehow or other, the labour must be found for aircraft production. The genuine and immediate demands of the Ministry of Aircraft Production had by now become extremely difficult to meet; for they were concentrated in the worst labour areas and the shortage of mobile women was acute. A series of stringent administrative measures were needed to fulfil the demands. Intake into the women's Services would have to be reduced to a minimum; women up to the age of fifty inclusive would have to register for employment; the Ministry of Aircraft Production would have to keep the mechanics loaned to them by the R.A.F.; the Services would have to postpone, for the time being, their claims on men employed on aircraft production; the Ministry of Supply must so far as possible make its releases of men in areas where the Ministry of Aircraft Production needed them; the highest preference must in effect be given to the filling of vacancies in aircraft production. These measures were willingly approved by the War Cabinet.[1]

[1] For implementation of these measures see Section (ii).

After all these discussions, the adjusted manpower budget for the period from 1st July 1942 to 31st December 1943 appeared in July 1943 as follows:

Thousands

| | Strength at 1st July 1942 | Original allocation | Adjusted allocation (July 1943) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Navy | 527 | 323 | 339 |
| Army | 2,592 | 429 | 511 |
| R.A.F. | 961 | 247 | 311 |
| Admiralty (Supply) | 814 | 111 | 111 |
| Ministry of Supply | 1,656 | − 78 | −165 |
| M.A.P. | 1,514 | 503 | 259 |
| Other essential industries and services | | 116 | 163 |
| | | 1,651 | 1,529 |

NOTE: The total in the last column of the table on p. 446 is 75,000 less than the total 'original allocation' here given on account of the Civil Defence entry.

These total authorised demands in fact exceeded prospective supplies; in the last nine months of the period the deficit threatened to be about 56,000. The War Cabinet felt however, that since the estimates of supply were provisional it was justifiable to budget for a deficit. But it was emphasised that, if the deficit materialised, it was on no account to fall on aircraft production.

Manpower had become an almost continuous preoccupation of the War Cabinet. When the mid-1943 review was ended, it was already time to look forward to the results of the July manpower survey. During 1943 a budget would have to be drawn up for the next manpower period—this time the calendar year 1944. The completion of the budget before the end of 1943 meant that manpower distribution was planned well ahead and would not have to accept accomplished facts. On the other hand, there were no figures for the strength of the Services and various industries at the end of 1943 and the budget dispositions would probably have to be revised.

When the 1943 manpower survey appeared it was clear that no one had been daunted by previous experience; the total demands for additional men and women came to 1,190,000. The fantasy of such figures—however impressive the arguments that accompanied them —was amply revealed by the estimate of labour supply. As previously forecast, wastage from the country's labour force was bound to exceed new intake. Even without battle casualties, the total occupied population of the United Kingdom would fall by about 150,000 in 1944. The manpower problem was no longer one of closing a gap between demand and supply by subtracting at the demand end and adding at the supply end. Nothing was left to add. The country was fully mobilised and all that remained was to change the distribution of manpower as the strategy of war demanded. In planning for 1944,

the main strategic question mark was the duration of the war with Germany.

The Prime Minister put forward two alternative assumptions. First it might be assumed for manpower purposes that the maximum effort must be made in 1944 and that Germany would be defeated by the end of that year. This would make it possible to slash requirements for munitions which could not be delivered until after 1944, and for men who could not be trained to fight in 1944; training organisations and the like could also be reduced. Secondly, it might be assumed that the German war would continue well beyond 1944. On this assumption, the Forces and munitions industries had been built up to levels that could not possibly be maintained; substantial reductions would be necessary and plans would have to be made for keeping them in balance. On either assumption, American aid would be necessary; if the German war ended in 1944, the aid would be chiefly in equipment for British Forces; but if German resistance were further prolonged, American Forces would have to make good increasingly the decline in British fighting strength. One thing, however, was already clear. The timing of peak mobilisation had proved fortunate. Britain could afford to keep her armed forces at their extraordinarily high level for the great attack on Europe, in the knowledge that American mobilisation was now great enough to make the gamble safe.

Ministers agreed to work on the first assumption and they appointed a Manpower Committee,[1] with both an official and a ministerial section, to work out a manpower solution for 1944 on this basis. The Committee concluded that to ensure the maximum effort in 1944[2] the prime necessity was for further intakes into all three Services and the merchant navy and for increases in coal-mining and inland transport; there was fear lest deficiencies in these last two 'civilian' industries might handicap the invasion of Europe.[3] The only way of meeting these demands was to reduce the labour force of all three supply departments (even including the Ministry of Aircraft Production) of Civil Defence and of some of the Group III industries. Protests about the detailed allocation figures that were suggested inevitably arose; a further reduction in Civil Defence, for example, seemed risky in face of possible rocket attacks and air-raids on invasion assembly points. But in December 1943 the War Cabinet accepted the figures as the best method of deploying the limited manpower.

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[1] The chairman of the ministerial committee was Sir John Anderson who remained manpower co-ordinator after becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in September 1943.

[2] The Committee allowed for existing plans for operations against Japan in 1944 and its figures did not take really unreasonable risks should the German war continue throughout 1945.

[3] See Chapter XVI.

*Manpower Allocations, January to December 1944*

Thousands

| | Original Demands | Allocated Dec. 1943 | Revised Allocation Sept. 1944 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Navy | 287 | 72 | 58 |
| Army | 343 | 147 | 217 |
| R.A.F. | 142 | 65 | 49 |
| Nursing Services | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Total Services. | 776 | 289 | 331 |
| Civil Defence | | −50 | −50 |
| Group I | | | |
| Admiralty (Supply) | 71 | −13 | −68 |
| Ministry of Supply | 31 | −220 | −170 |
| M.A.P. | 12 | −69 | −198 |
| Other Group I | 6 | −10 | 13 |
| Total Group I | 120 | −312 | −423 |
| Total Group II | 240 | 123 | 75 |
| Group III | | | |
| Expanding items | 56 | 49 | 31 |
| Contracting items | 106 | −197 | −95 |
| Decline in industrial population | | −150 | −175 |

The distribution of the Group II[1] and Group III allocations was left to the Manpower Committee. The supplies of labour available were so small that this task was far from easy.

It will be seen from the last table that the budget was revised during 1944. During that year, the difficulties of budgeting in a war economy that had passed peak mobilisation were very great. New demands for the assault on Europe upset the original programmes. The Ministry of Supply, faced with such new and urgent operational demands as the 'mulberry' harbours and with bigger requirements for artillery ammunition following experience in Italy, were releasing nowhere near the numbers planned. The railways and ports needed still more workers to cope with invasion traffic. The results were apparent not in the intakes into the Services, but in an over rapid decline of the labour force in shipbuilding and aircraft production and in a failure to reach the increases planned for Group II industries (other than the merchant navy, coal-mining and inland transport) and Group III industries. Moreover, soon after D-Day it was clear that intakes into the Army must be increased in order to keep its decline and the 'cannibalisation' of divisions to a minimum. The budget adjustments in September 1944 were designed for this purpose.

These budget discussions of the autumn of 1944 were the last to focus almost exclusively on the German war.

[1] The War Cabinet itself made specific allocations for three of the Group II industries—the merchant navy, coal-mining, and inland transport.

In the later years of the war manpower budgeting had become a very powerful instrument. It was, in fact, the only method the War Cabinet ever possessed of determining the balance of the whole war economy by a central and direct allocation of physical resources among the various sectors. During the first two or three years of war, physical and financial controls had been dispersed among many departments and committees. When manpower became the decisive shortage the situation was transformed: every economic enterprise needed manpower, and to control its distribution from the centre signified direct central planning of the whole economy. At the end of the war, the manpower budgets were the main force in determining every part of the war effort from the numbers of R.A.F. heavy bombers raiding Germany to the size of the clothing ration.

In many ways the budgeting process was somewhat crude. For example, much depended on the reliability of forward estimates of demands and supplies. In some directions, a great deal of skill in the compilation and use of statistics was developed; in others, calculations remained uncertain to the end. Behind these difficulties lay the very nature of the war itself. Budgets had to be planned for reasonable periods ahead but the changes and chances of war made strategical priorities fleeting. In December 1942, for example, the building of naval vessels was the top priority. Yet less than a year later the First Lord of the Admiralty was saying that, owing to the difficulties of manning ships, all new ships except destroyers completed after March 1944, besides many existing ships, would have to be put into reserve. No one could have foreseen in December 1942 that the U-boat peril would decline so swiftly. The rise and fall of the aircraft production priorities is another important example of rapid change with which the manpower budgets had to try to keep pace. On the whole, manpower budgeting succeeded in being surprisingly flexible.

The development of the techniques and procedures of manpower budgeting is impressive. However, the main point about budgets is that they should be implemented. We must now turn to see how far the plans were fulfilled and by what means.

## (ii)

## Implementing the Budgets

It was a far cry from the complicated arithmetic that culminated in the precise manpower budgets set forth in the War Cabinet conclusions to the daily work of the thousands of employment exchanges where the figures were translated into so many men and women with

individual histories and problems. Yet the redistribution planned in the budgets had finally to be made through these exchanges. The immense variety of regional problems, types of labour and personal circumstances made the whole process indirect and infinitely complex. It was so complex that it is surprising to find that the budgets did in fact come within reasonable distance of fulfilment.

*Manpower Allocations and Achievements*

Thousands

| | 1.7.42 to 31.12.43 | | Calendar year 1944 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Final Allocation | Achievement | Final Allocation | Achievement |
| Navy | 350 | 336 | 58 | 61 |
| Army | 507 | 524 | 217 | 244 |
| R.A.F. | 303 | 301 | 49 | 49 |
| Nursing Services | — | — | 5 | 5 |
| Total services | 1,160 | 1,161 | 331 | 359 |
| Civil Defence Services | −90 | −87 | −50 | −83 |
| Admiralty (Production) | 111 | 104 | −68 | −68 |
| Ministry of Supply | −165 | −186 | −170 | −138 |
| M.A.P. | 259 | 307 | −198 | −297 |
| Other Group I | — | — | 13 | 94 |
| Total Group I | 205 | 225 | −423 | −409 |
| Group II | 163 | 128 | 82[1] | 30 |
| Group III | | | | |
| Expanding items | | | 31 | −70 |
| Contracting items | — | — | −102[1] | |
| Decline in industrial population | — | — | −175 | −215 |

The achievements in meeting the allocations of the budgets are set down in the above table. This shows that right through to the end of the war the Ministry of Labour earned its reputation for finding, like clockwork, the authorised intakes for the Services. It is also clear that in spite of the difficulties such as those over aircraft production described earlier in this chapter, the Ministry did more than was required of it in building the munitions industries up to their peak. The most troublesome gaps between allocation and achievement were those in the Group II and Group III industries. In these groups, government departments did not let contracts; in consequence, they had neither the same information about the industries nor the same control over them. These industries had to take more or less their own course in adjusting themselves to estimated levels, with little assistance from official directions to workers, or from high wages. Moreover, the Group II industries and the expanding items in Group III were

[1] These figures are slightly different from those in the table on p. 451. In the present table the food, drink and tobacco industries are included in Group III; in the earlier table these industries were included in Group II.

expected to increase largely as a result of the planned reductions in the labour force of the munitions industries. In the event, the process of securing cuts in armament production, at points where the released workers would be most useful to other programmes, proved extraordinarily difficult.[1]

After all these qualifications have been made it remains true that the achievements in fulfilling the manpower budgets were very high. It is as well to relate the achievements to Table 2 (b) on p. 351 and to see the changes wrought in the distribution of the total labour force. The armed forces continued to rise until after the great attack in Europe had been made. The munitions industries, on the other hand, passed their peak sometime in 1943. Group II industries reached their lowest point in 1943 and then showed a small rise. The fall in the Group III industries taken as a whole was never arrested. Some of the important industries in this group fell very low indeed; the building and civil engineering industries were reduced to forty-two per cent of their pre-war strength and textiles to fifty-six per cent. The great war-time growth of the numbers of men in the Forces and munitions industries had been fed mainly by a very large reduction in the Group III industries, aided by a large fall in unemployment and a smaller recruitment from the non-industrial sector. The increase in the numbers of women in the Forces, munitions industries and Group II industries (in the latter they went far towards replacing the losses of men) came from a very large recruitment from the non-industrial sector, some reduction in unemployment and a small fall in the Group III industries.

The figures for the increase in the number of women at work understate the number of women who were mobilised; for two part-timers are counted as one worker. In 1943, there were about 750,000 part-time women and in 1944, 900,000. In addition there were about a million men and women aged sixty-five and over in paid employment and at least a million women of all ages giving voluntary unpaid service.[2] Nor must the increase in the hours of work be forgotten.[3] Outside all these figures, there was an immeasurable amount of spare-time war work. The Home Guard took over duties formerly performed by the Army. Civil Defence could be pruned because there were so many spare-time workers, and fire-watching was almost wholly done in out-of-work hours. In addition, some people spent

[1] The difficulties of adjusting cuts in manpower to supply requirements are dealt with in *British War Production*, pp. 224–227.

[2] Mostly on a part-time basis.

[3] In the United Kingdom average weekly hours in the engineering and allied industries in 1938 were 48 for men and 44·2 for women. In mid-1943 the figures were 54·1 for men and 46·9 for women. With the increased proportion of women wage-earners this meant an increase in hours per wage-earner per week of about nine per cent. (*The Impact of the War on Civilian Consumption.*)

odd evenings at factories and others spent their holidays at harvest camps.[1]

Great Britain had achieved the highest possible mobilisation. And the labour force had been redistributed pretty well in accordance with the pattern of the manpower budgets. How had this been done? It happened in part because the budgets themselves produced their own administrative consequences. From 1942 onwards, the labour entitlements set forth in the manpower budgets were invariably very much smaller than the original demands. When the budgets were settled, the departments concerned had to embark on some hasty revision of programmes. The War Office, for example, with its timetable of reduced Army intakes in mind, would have to consider where cuts must fall; if the Army's 'tail' could not take the main weight of the reduction, a revised order of battle might be necessary. The Army's requirements from the Ministry of Supply would also be changed. The Ministry of Supply in turn would have to reconcile these requirements with its own allocation of labour within the munitions industries. The programme changes of all the supply departments had to be considered with the Joint War Production Staff and, finally, contracts would be modified and firms would change the labour demands they had notified to their local employment exchanges. This process was lengthy. Sometimes several months of the budgeting period had passed before departments had revised their plans to match their allowances of manpower.[2] Sometimes, too, as has been seen, new demands made it impossible for supply departments to give up all the labour required of them.[3] In general, however, manpower budgeting greatly strengthened the Ministry of Labour's control over the increasingly insatiable departmental demands for manpower. The Ministry could say firmly that it would give no priority to manpower demands that had not been blessed by the War Cabinet with an allocation.[4]

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[1] For a comparison of mobilisation in the United Kingdom and the United States see pp. 370–372 above. It is of some interest to compare the peak mobilisation of 1943 with that of 1918. In 1943, in very rough terms, about a third of the British population of working age was in the Forces, Civil Defence and the munitions industries compared with twenty-eight per cent. in 1918; about sixteen per cent. was in Group II industries compared with thirteen per cent. in 1918, about fifty-two per cent. was in Group III and in the non-industrial sector compared with fifty-nine per cent. Greater mechanisation of the armed forces in 1943 meant that a smaller proportion of men aged fourteen to sixty-four was in the Forces and Civil Defence than in 1918—twenty-nine per cent. against thirty-four per cent. Women had been brought directly into the war effort to a far greater extent. Over fifteen per cent. of those between fourteen and fifty-nine were in the Services, Civil Defence and munitions in 1943 compared with seven per cent. in 1918.

[2] Especially when, as in the period July 1942–December 1943, the period covered by the budget was well under way before the budget was completed.

[3] See p. 451 above.

[4] This was a powerful stimulus to departments sponsoring Group II and Group III industries to make sure they asked for an allocation for every industry, however small, that needed an increase in labour.

Once the programme changes had been made, the main responsibility for fulfilling the manpower budgets lay with the Ministry of Labour. The main weapons of labour supply policy had all been forged by the end of 1941; thereafter, the Ministry had to refine the policies, adjust them to the changing needs of the war and administer them vigorously. Systematic manpower budgeting helped the Ministry by giving it a programme on which to base all its plans for supplying the right amounts of labour in the right places. The main plans were drawn up at the Ministry's headquarters and were then embodied in a great volume of instructions to the regional and local offices.

We have already seen that the Ministry of Labour fulfilled its obligations to the Services no less handsomely in the last three years of war, when new sources of fit young recruits were difficult to find, than in the first years of plentiful manpower supply. The supplies of men for the Services were in general still governed by policies approved before the end of 1941. In December 1941, it will be remembered, the principle of individual deferment had superseded the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. The Ministry of Labour could only meet the Services' big allocation by constantly combing-out deferred men from munitions and civil industries. The releases from particular industries did not always go according to plan. The building industry was still a problem; programmes for big releases of fit men from it were approved at the end of 1941,[1] modified during 1942 while the 'Bolero' plans were in the air, approved once more at the end of 1942 but then reduced again late in 1943 as urgent building work multiplied.[2] But shortfalls in the release of men for the Services from some industries were compensated by releases above expectations from others. The other source of intakes for the Services was of course the young men reaching call-up age month by month. This supply was increased by lowering the call-up age from 18½ to 18.[3]

The continuous comb-out to find men for the Services might disturb hard-pressed employers, but it was not in itself a complicated administrative process. It was far more difficult to find replacements for these men. Here, indeed, the problem merged with that of finding labour for munitions and other essential industries. This in turn merged with the problem of the further mobilisation of women. For the mobilisation of men had passed its peak before Pearl Harbour. Remaining reserves of men such as those discharged from the Forces, older men in unessential industries, Irish labour, and prisoners of war had to be used to the utmost; but for the most part it was only by finding women to take men's places in a wide range of activities, that

[1] See above, Chapter XI, Section (ii).

[2] e.g. more 'Bolero' demands, airfield construction, 'mulberry' harbours.

[3] This required legislation and was embodied in the National Service Act of 17th December 1942, which reduced the age of registration to seventeen years eight months.

men could be freed for the Services or for the heavy physical work they alone could perform. These demands for women to replace men did not appear in the figures of the manpower budgets. They were additional to the 'net' increases of women in essential industries and the women's Services, authorised in those budgets.

The demands for women were, then, immense. But these demands, viewed simply as a total, considerably understate the administrative complexities of finding the supplies. For while women were spread fairly evenly over the country, the demands for them were not. For example, of the munitions industries' demands for labour in the twelve months ending June 1943, fifty-five per cent. were in three regions—the Midland region, the North Western, and the London and South Eastern; only three per cent. of the demands were in Wales. When the Ministry of Aircraft Production requirements were the focal point of discussion in mid-1943, over sixty per cent. of their demands for the last half of 1943 proved to be in the same three heavily laden regions. Other important demands were also concentrated there; cotton spinners, for example, were needed in Lancashire. In the latter part of the war, the local resources of men and women in these regions had already been exhausted and big new demands were extraordinarily difficult to meet. On the other hand, Wales, Scotland and the Northern Region still had plentiful supplies of women. Industry's outstanding need therefore was for mobile women, the very women that the Services also needed.

The supply of mobile women was limited. The limits were in part set by definition; for women with husbands in the Services and the merchant navy and married women with household responsibilities were always counted immobile. Moreover, the great majority of mobile women were already in some job or other. The Ministry of Labour's emphasis in registering women for employment was increasingly placed upon mobility and not simply, as in 1941, on identifying those women who were available for transfer to war work. It was also necessary for the Ministry of Labour to harden its heart. From 1942 onwards, the machinery for interviews and transfers was speeded up by giving women less time to make up their minds than they had had in 1941. Scrupulous courtesy was still urged upon the local exchanges but this was not thought incompatible with the 'absolute firmness of decisions and promptness in giving effect to them', that now became the order of the day. Definitions of exemptions were narrowed and personal problems were scrutinised more sternly if not less sympathetically. The new sternness extended not only to the women but also to their employers, whose objections had often produced delays and failure in transfer policy in the past.

These methods helped to find mobile women. But it would have been impossible to find enough without freeing mobile women from

their existing jobs in easy labour areas by replacing them with immobile women. In congested areas, of course, immobile women were themselves needed for war work. Again we see the different parts of the labour supply problem merging with one another and again we must emphasise how complex were the movements between jobs that were needed to achieve the net figures of the manpower budgets. In order to produce mobile women it was necessary to increase the total numbers of women in employment.

This meant that the net of the Registration of Employment Order must be stretched wider. By October 1942 it had been spread upwards to catch the 45½-year-old women and down to catch the 18½-year-olds. At these limits, the yield of mobile women was very small; girls under nineteen could not be transferred away from home and the percentage of mobile women among the over-forties was—not surprisingly—as low as three per cent. But the registrations produced immobile women. While more women up and down the age-scale were called upon to register, the 'household responsibilities' that might exempt them from work were more narrowly defined. From the spring of 1942, only women living in their own homes (or in rooms where neither board nor service were provided) and looking after at least one other person came within the definition. Of these women, those with children living at home were still left alone, although sometimes local appeals were made to them to consider seriously whether they could undertake some part-time work. All other women coming within the 'household responsibilities' definition were interviewed and classified into those available for full-time work, those available for part-time work, and those not available for any work. Those available for full-time work were placed locally and if necessary directions were issued; but until May 1943 no compulsion was used for part-time workers.[1] The main obstacle was that the part-timers were mostly needed as substitutes in industries not covered by the Essential Work Orders; the Ministry of Labour had always been reluctant to direct people to firms where the mutual obligations imposed by those Orders did not exist. In May 1943, however, these objections to the direction of part-timers were removed by a new Order[2] which gave some equivalent security to men and women directed to firms outside the Essential Work Order.

By the summer of 1943, the processes of registration and interview had gathered up most of the women in the non-industrial population who were available for work. Then, however, the urgent needs of

[1] The employment of part-time women involved of course a host of problems for factories, the Ministry of Labour and the women themselves. Much organisation was needed.

[2] Control of Employment (Directed Persons) Order April 1943 (S.R. & O. 1943, No. 651).

aircraft production compelled a last squeeze. Even the small supplies of women to be obtained by stretching registration until it included the fifty-year-olds could not be despised.[1] Here indeed, the Government seemed to be going further than public opinion in mobilising women. Although earlier on, it had wavered about military conscription of women, the War Cabinet agreed readily to this last effort of industrial conscription. But in Parliament and sections of the press, where military conscription had been gladly accepted, there was a widespread feeling that it was too much to call up grandmothers for employment.

Registration for employment was the main method of bringing more and more women within the control of the Ministry of Labour. Further measures were necessary to make that control complete by making the exchanges aware of all movements between jobs. This was done through orders which required employers to engage all women between eighteen and forty through the exchanges, and to inform the local exchanges when any of their workers gave or were given notice to leave.[2] Movements were also checked by reviews of the register. The review of November 1942 was particularly important for it covered the twenty to thirty-year-olds, many of whom had registered when transfer policy was less severe.

It was largely the enlistment of married women into employment during 1942 and 1943 that made the peak of British mobilisation so very high. The other main source to which the manpower budgets looked in those years was a decrease in the labour force of less essential industries. As we saw, these industries had to be defined with increasing care.[3] Until well into 1941, the Board of Trade had accelerated the Ministry of Labour's activities in withdrawing labour from civilian industries. But contraction in some cases went too far and more discrimination was needed. By the end of 1943, many civilian industries, such as textiles, paper, furniture and laundries, had good claims to an increase of labour. On the other hand, the Board of Trade agreed that the really unessential industries could be squeezed to any extent the Ministry of Labour wished; if necessary, they might be wiped out.

The industries that could still yield labour were dealt with by a variety of direct and indirect methods. At the end of 1942, the possibility of extending concentration was discussed. But retail trade and some of the concentrated industries such as clothing, hats and caps and paint contained a high proportion of small firms; this made the

[1] Not more than 20,000 were expected from this source.

[2] Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Orders (Consolidating Order January 1943, S.R. & O. 1943, No. 142). Control of Employment (Notice of Termination of Employment) Order, August 1943 (S.R. & O. 1943, No. 1173).

[3] See p. 444 above.

task administratively difficult and politically untouchable. The making-up section of the clothing industry was concentrated at this late hour, but the scheme was a failure as a method of labour withdrawal. In practice, the orderly release of labour from less essential industries meant that the Ministry of Labour had to prepare, in consultation with the government department concerned and with the individual industries, a whole series of separate schemes and administrative devices. Some industries, especially the unconcentrated ones with large numbers of small firms, had no orderly schemes and were left to struggle along with such elderly immobile workers as the Ministry of Labour and the march of time left them. The lack of replacements for ordinary industrial wastage was probably as important as actual labour withdrawals in decreasing the labour force of the less essential industries.

Direct labour withdrawals were aided by indirect methods of cutting demands for labour. New methods of controlling the manufacture and supply of civilian goods[1] ensured that only essential articles were produced except in special cases where the Ministry of Labour had no use for a firm's labour. Some of the austerity measures —those for example which forbade decorations on dress or on pottery --were introduced primarily to save labour. In addition, some of the utility schemes not only safeguarded price control and quality but also increased productivity by standardisation.

By a combination of all these methods, the less essential industries went on losing labour until during 1944 they were somewhere near rock bottom; it proved impossible to release the numbers hoped for in the manpower budget for that year. Indeed, when mobile women were needed for high priority work at the end of 1943, the only way of obtaining them was to withdraw them without prior substitution from a wide range of reserved or protected work, including simple repetitive work in the munitions industries.

The first aim of all these labour supply policies in the late years of the war was the release of young women for the Services and industry. How were the women distributed between these two demands? The women's Services were always recruited mainly from volunteers; the volunteering was reinforced by the National Service Act of 1941.[2] But this Act only caught single women; its scope was further restricted because large numbers of single women had already been directed to vital war work and must be kept there. Women called up under the National Service Act could express an option for the Services, for certain essential industry, or at first, for Civil Defence. In practice, one-third of the women called up opted for the Services, one-third for industry and the rest expressed no preference. The scheme was

[1] See below, Chapter XVII.

[2] See p. 314 above.

flexible and, as long as the needs of the Services were the most pressing, those who expressed no preference were called up into the auxiliary Navy, Army or Air Force. In order to meet the Services' requirements, it was necessary to extend the call-up from the 1920 and 1921 age groups to the 1919's and the 1918's, to take a firmer line about the withdrawal of all these classes from their employment and to encourage volunteering among other classes, even among women in reserved work. In the autumn of 1942 it was contemplated that the call-up would have to be extended to cover ages down to nineteen and up to thirty.

In the end, however, the nineteen-year-olds were called up but none of the older age-groups; for, by 1943, the needs of the munitions industries for mobile women had become greater than those of the women's Services. In the summer of 1943, the top labour priority was aircraft production, and the urgent problem was to divert every available woman into it. This meant keeping them out of the women's Services. The Minister of Labour was most reluctant to alter the policy accepted by Parliament by directing into industry women who had opted for the Services when they registered for National Service. Such women became the sole source of recruitment for the Services. Volunteering was stopped and no more age classes were conscripted under the National Service Act.[1] In 1944 a small additional intake was allowed to the women's forces by opening volunteering to girls of 17½ to 19, i.e. below the 'mobile' age.

The demands of the munitions industries had become supreme, and the chief demand was for mobile women for transfer to areas where a grave labour shortage persisted. The machinery for such transfers had been built up during 1942, on a 'coloured area' scheme.[2] Each Ministry of Labour local office area was classified into one of four groups—scarlet areas whose needs could only be met by imports from beyond daily travelling distance, red areas in which all available labour was required to meet existing demands, amber areas with neither considerable deficiencies nor surpluses and green areas which had surplus labour available. A region might contain within itself areas of each colour; but there were regions which could be definitely marked as supply or demand regions. In order to allocate mobile women fairly, demand regions were linked with supply regions—the north-west, for example with the north and north-east regions, the south-west with the south. In supply regions all mobile women not needed for first priority vacancies[3] in their own scarlet areas, were to be exported for such vacancies in the corresponding demand regions; the supply regions were expected to

[1] H. of C. Deb., Vol. 391, Col. 1797 (29th July 1943). Statement by Minister of Labour.
[2] This was a modification of the scheme launched at the time of concentration.
[3] i.e. headquarters preference vacancies. See p. 303 and p. 463.

fill all their other vacancies with immobile women. In July 1942, the screw was twisted further—to alleviate the desperate straits of the scarlet areas, mobile women in green and amber areas had to be taken from their jobs, even from vital war work. This policy was inevitably difficult to operate, especially in Wales and Scotland,[1] where the removal of the mothers of the future generation caused strong nationalist resentment.

Moving workers, and in particular women, to the work was one way of meeting the munitions industries' needs in scarlet labour areas. A simultaneous approach from another direction was also necessary; work had to be placed with more respect for the availability of workers. It was much too late to alter radically the faulty distribution of munitions work; any measures from 1942 onwards could not hope to do more than prevent the position from growing worse. Soon after the Minister of Production took office in 1942, he established a Location of Industry Committee to assist in regulating the location of war work. One of the first jobs of the Committee was to draw up a list of over-congested towns and districts,[2] known as 'designated areas'; no additional production load involving an increase of more than twenty-five workers could be placed in them unless equivalent labour relief was obtained in the area or the Ministry of Production gave specific approval. Modification of the rules meant that the equivalent labour reliefs were not always provided; in 1944, when a serious deficiency in the supply of labour in the designated areas threatened to jeopardise vital production, the needs of this work had to be met by a levy on all the other labour employed in the areas.[3] In 1942, the Location of Industry Committee had also tried to get production, both munitions and civilian, actually shifted from the congested to the easy labour areas. The Board of Trade, for example, undertook to reconcentrate industries in order to produce geographical shifts and to make such shifts the basis of any new concentration schemes. But the possibilities were limited; only munitions and civilian production with very light machinery could be moved, while local passions broke in a storm round the Board of Trade's head when they suggested, for example, that the hat trade should be moved from Luton. The other main occasion for redistributing the production load arose when the Ministry of Supply began to reduce its labour force; the emphasis was increasingly upon the release of labour in the areas where it was needed by the Ministry of Aircraft Production rather than upon convenience and economy as envisaged by the Ministry of Supply.

[1] See e.g. H. of C. Deb., Vol. 379, Cols. 1628–9; Vol. 382, Cols. 141, 660, 1160; Vol. 386, Col. 757.

[2] The first list of areas was Coventry, Corsham, Stroud Valley, Leicester, Preston, Kidderminster, Luton and Dunstable. The list was continuously modified.

[3] A few essential industries were exempt.

Producing total supplies to meet total demands and manipulating regional supplies to meet regional demands constituted an extraordinarily intricate task. At any moment in any area supplies and demands rarely balanced. Some procedure was therefore required to settle the order in which vacancies should be filled. A previous chapter has told of the establishment of the inter-departmental Preference Sub-Committee. This Committee continued to draw up lists of vacancies in vital industries or services which must have first claim on labour supplies. These were the headquarter preference vacancies, and in addition some regions operated a system of second or regional preferences. Lists of preference vacancies tended to become very long, and when in the summer of 1943 the War Cabinet accorded aircraft production overriding priority, the system had to be changed. The interpretation of overriding priority that the Ministry of Labour at first passed to its Regional Controllers was very literal, and the results were as anomalous as those of all the earlier war-time attempts at super-priorities. After strong complaints, a new scheme was agreed. It was the Ministry of Production's responsibility to draw up a list of vital products which ranked with those parts of the aircraft programme certified by the Ministry of Aircraft Production as important. When aircraft production lost its overriding priority in January 1944, the Ministry of Aircraft Production had to apply for inclusion in the list like any other department. This exclusive list of designated products was translated by the headquarters preference committee into vacancies in individual firms, and these alone were granted first preference. From January 1944, common national standards were laid down for the granting of regional or second preferences.

Regional problems perhaps loomed largest in supplying the authorised labour increases in industry. Some industries however had their own particular difficulties in combating the effects of excessive decreases. The worst troubles arose in the industries that had to be rebuilt after they had contracted too far; they were often badly paid and unattractive and unskilled women were quite useless to them. Coal-mining was the outstanding example and required extreme measures. Only former coal-miners or fit young men were of use to the industry. By the summer of 1943, the return of former coal-miners from industry and the Forces had reached its practical limits; but the needs of the coal-mines were far from being satisfied. All men called up for military service were given the option of going into the mines and a publicity campaign tried to attract volunteers from any existing job except aircraft production. There was little surprise when volunteering did not yield adequate results and in November 1943, the War Cabinet agreed that some men between eighteen and twenty-five who would otherwise go into the Services should be called up for the

coal-mines. The selection of the men, hereafter known as the 'Bevin boys', was to be by ballot.

It is clear that to implement the manpower budgets, millions of men and women had to be shifted between jobs and between districts. To have achieved so nearly the great redistributions planned in the manpower budgets, with their swift changes of emphasis to match the strategy of war, was in itself a triumph. To have achieved them in an orderly fashion without great public storms and legacies of bitterness, was even more remarkable. The general post was accompanied by a due quota of administrative mistakes, vociferous complaints and inter-departmental haggling, but in general it went smoothly and received the overwhelming consent of the nation.

Most important in enlisting this consent was the constant insistence upon welfare inside and outside the factories and upon industrial morale. This emphasis smoothed the movements of the population. It also helped to reduce absenteeism and wastage and to maintain productivity at a time when the exhaustion of labour reserves made this increasingly important, and growing monotony and war strain made it increasingly difficult. By 1942 and 1943, the war seemed to stretch interminably over past and future. Long hours of work in factories were followed by Home Guard duties or firewatching, by shopping and cooking under war-time limitations: streets were dark and homes lonely. In such a soil, illness, absenteeism and discontent might well have flourished. Absenteeism and industrial disputes were, indeed, prominent in the news from time to time, but analyses of the figures rebutted the exaggerated assertions of ill-informed critics. Only in March and April 1944, in the jumpy days before D-Day, did industrial unrest threaten to become serious, but it faded once D-Day became imminent and then arrived. Nevertheless, continuous efforts and a wide range of methods were necessary to reduce absenteeism and discontent.

As labour became more and more scarce, the supply departments shared the enthusiasm of the Ministry of Labour for welfare services and for the efficient use of labour.[1] Inside the factories, there was constant insistence upon compliance with the Factory Acts and with war-time legislation—upon adequate ventilation and lighting in spite of blackout difficulties, upon sanitary facilities when overcrowding of the factories was straining them, upon canteens and upon safety measures. There were other non-statutory facilities to be encouraged such as shopping arrangements, music during work time, barbers' visits. Outside the factories, the chief problems to be solved were housing and billeting, transport, travel facilities for transferred workers and the care of small children. Welfare provision was not, by

[1] M.A.P. had lagged behind but in August 1942 it created a department specifically dealing with these problems, and in December 1942, a Production Efficiency Board.

itself, enough. When the composition of factory populations was changing so curiously and so rapidly, 'personnel management'—an unlovely name—equalled in importance technical and works management. Staff had to be trained to do this job. Moreover, psychological obstacles tending to keep productivity low had to be overcome—for example, by encouraging co-operation between management and workers and by emphasising the importance of work for war weapons through photographs, target charts, visits by soldiers, sailors and airmen. The quantitative results of all these efforts cannot be measured. It would be a mistake to ascribe to them greater significance in the struggle for production than the solution of technical difficulties or the steady flow of materials. Nevertheless, their importance in a war which grew long and weary was unquestioned.

A comparison of British mobilisation with that of other countries has been made in an earlier chapter. It should be remembered that the reserves of Britain's manpower lay primarily among the housewives and the men and women in numberless civilian industries. To drain and use those reserves and to thrust them into war-making occupations presented formidable administrative difficulties and imposed upon the population a strain heavier than the other English-speaking Allies had to endure. Not only was the strain more severe in Britain; it also lasted longer. But the Government mastered the difficulties and the people took the strain.