

SECTION II.—EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT DURING THE WAR, 1939–1945

(i) Total Labour Force

411. The male labour force is estimated to have been 520,000 at the outbreak of war, subject to a natural increase which but for the war would have averaged approximately 6,000 per annum over the period 1939–45. Thus had it not been for the interferences brought about by war, there would have been some 544,000 males available for employment in December, 1943, and 555,000 in December, 1945. The building-up of the Armed Forces from a peacetime strength of 3,000 to a peak figure of 157,000 in 1942 seriously affected these estimates, and, in spite of industrial conscription, deferred retirements, &c., the male working population is estimated to have fallen in that year to 396,000. By December, 1943, the reduction of the Armed Forces had brought an improvement and the figure had risen to 406,000, but, even as late as December, 1945, with 45,000 men still in the Armed Forces, and a large number whose rehabilitation was incomplete, due to sickness, injuries, necessity for industrial training, &c., there were only some 480,000 men available to industry. A diagrammatic representation of these changes is given in Table 23 of the Appendix.

412. Apart from temporary setbacks to industry, war must leave more lasting effects, and not the least is the permanent loss of a considerable portion of the labour force through death and injury on active service. Deaths on active service, excluding those due to natural causes, numbered 10,130.

(ii) Distribution of the Labour Force

413. A recently conducted survey of the employment position at October, 1945, yielded figures showing the staffs of the industries surveyed, together with their estimated pre-war staff and facilitated detailed investigation of the effects of this withdrawal of man-power upon various industries.

414. In previous reports estimates have been given of the labour force over the war years, but it has been difficult to produce an accurate picture as reliable information was available over a limited field only. Use was made of—

- (1) Statistics of recruitments from industry.
- (2) Special surveys of certain industries.
- (3) Figures of industrial mobilization for special industries.

415. While these figures were accurate they were not sufficiently comprehensive, and estimates of the labour force had therefore to be approximate within the scope of the information available.

416. With the carrying-out of the recent survey covering all industry other than farming it became possible to check the earlier approximations and to line them up on the actual 1939 and 1945 figures, thus reducing the margin of error to small dimensions. Table 22 of the Appendix shows this amended estimate of the distribution of the labour force over industry in each of the war years, and a diagrammatic representation is given in Table 25. Tables 46 and 47 give detailed results of the October, 1945, survey.

(iii) Increased use of Female Labour

417. Perhaps the most far-reaching effect of the reduction of available man-power is the increased use made of female labour in industry. The female labour force was 180,000 in September, 1939. Statistics indicate that of the natural increase in female population approximately 1,000 per annum would normally become available to industry, the remainder being offset by marriage, assumption of home duties, &c. On this estimate the female labour force would have reached 185,000 in 1943, and 187,000 in December, 1945. However, so great was the effect of industrial conscription, continuation of work after marriage, &c., during the war years that by December, 1943, some 228,000 women were employed, and, in addition, 8,000 were in the Armed Forces. The totals declined in succeeding years, and by December, 1945, 200,000 were in employment, and 3,000 in the Armed Services (see also Table 24 of the Appendix).