

Provision of employment in South Wales for persons suspended from the mining industry on account of silicosis and pneumoconiosis.

Contributors

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BOARD OF TRADE

Provision of Employment in
South Wales for Persons Suspended
from the Mining Industry on
Account of Silicosis and
Pneumoconiosis



*Presented by the President of the Board of Trade to Parliament
by Command of His Majesty
December 1945*

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PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH WALES FOR PERSONS SUSPENDED FROM THE MINING INDUSTRY ON ACCOUNT OF SILICOSIS AND PNEUMOCONIOSIS

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF AN INVESTIGATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In accordance with the decision of the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister of Labour and National Service, a "Working Party" under the chairmanship of Mr. D. R. Grenfell, M.P., has investigated the problem of providing work in South Wales for persons suspended from the Mining Industry on account of Silicosis and Pneumoconiosis. The composition of the Working Party is set out in Appendix I. The present document summarises the results of the investigation and sets out in full at the end the Working Party's precise recommendations for action.

NATURE OF THE DISEASES

2. Silicosis and Pneumoconiosis are due to the effect of dust in the lungs. In the case of Silicosis, X-ray examination reveals the fibrosis in nodular form, whereas in Pneumoconiosis it appears as reticulation. Medical knowledge is incomplete, but Pneumoconiosis may be accepted as the early stage along the road to Silicosis. The greatest importance must therefore be attached to the early removal of Pneumoconiosis suspects from the mines in the initial stages of the disease. Medical evidence is unanimous that, provided this is done, the progress of the disease is arrested.

CONDITION OF PERSONS AFFECTED

3. In the past, where men suffering from Silicosis were awarded full compensation for total disablement, their effective working life was finished. Where they were awarded partial compensation (i.e. where the disease was not far advanced) they could undertake light work. The younger men now being suspended on partial compensation owing to Pneumoconiosis, on the other hand, are in reasonably good physical condition. Many have continued arduous mining work right up to the time of suspension, with but little diminution of strength. In the early stages of Silicosis, too, the men are reasonably fit and capable of working normal hours.

4. The war has clearly refuted the suggestion that men suffering from the early stages of Pneumoconiosis and Silicosis are substantially below standard in regard to ability to work, to learn, or to maintain good time-keeping. The Working Party have been impressed by the experience of an aircraft firm at Treforest Trading Estate which, selecting 200 disabled ex-colliery workers (including a number of Silicosis cases) reported that the men had proved after training to be excellent fitters and among the best time-keepers in the factory. Large numbers of these men have also been quite successfully employed under ordinary industrial conditions at Government-owned war factories. The Working Party go on to say that whilst they are anxious to remove misconceptions as to the condition of Silicotic and Pneumoconiotic persons, they have no desire to minimise their disability, which represents a handicap sufficient to justify special measures to ensure them employment.

WHAT IS SUITABLE WORK?

5. Persons affected by the diseases under consideration fall into two categories:—

(a) The vast majority who are capable of work in any light industry which does not involve working in dust or fumes and does not require heavy lifting. It is important, however, in these cases that long-distance travelling to work should be avoided. The evidence was unanimous that much travelling involves greater strain upon these workers than the actual working operations. Employment therefore should be made available within daily travelling distance not exceeding eight miles of the main centres of residence of such persons.

(b) A limited number of special cases who require "sheltered" employment under special conditions.

6. The Working Party are satisfied after careful enquiry that those in the first category can be employed by ordinary light industry under normal industrial conditions. They reject the suggestion that employment should be provided for them in special or subsidised State enterprises. They consider it to be of the utmost importance to avoid the sense of inferiority and dependence which would be inseparable from the segregation of this class of workers from their fellows. Nor is there anything in the nature of their disability to warrant such a course.

7. Those scheduled in the second category are the concern of the Disabled Persons Employment Corporation Ltd. The Corporation is planning a wide range of useful occupations, the output from which would be disposed of through ordinary commercial channels. The establishment of small centres to employ about 50 persons each is under active consideration for the following places:—*Tonybandy, Treorchy, Merthyr, Ystalyfera, Bargoed, Tonyrefail and Bridgend.*

8. The Working Party are satisfied after careful investigation that the proposals set out below, together with the plans of this Corporation, will not leave any material "gap" in the provision of employment to cover all classes of silicotic and pneumoconiotic persons.

THE NEED FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT

9. There is substantial agreement among all consulted that the provision of work for disabled persons is more urgent than in the case of able-bodied men and justifies a measure of priority. Conversely there is abundant evidence of marked physical and mental improvement among partly disabled persons when found any suitable kind of work.

THE NEED FOR NEW INDUSTRIES

10. The finding of new employment for pneumoconiotics would not present great difficulty, if full employment could be ensured in the areas concerned. They would automatically be absorbed. It is only in places where there is going to be some difficulty in getting full employment that special measures become necessary. Some of the areas most seriously affected by Silicosis and Pneumoconiosis are of this kind. They have no other industries to offer employment, and are among the places for which it is most difficult to obtain new industries, notwithstanding the Distribution of Industry Act. Industrialists are reluctant to locate new enterprises in the Western part of the South Wales coalfield, owing to its remoteness from markets and the additional transport costs which would be involved. They prefer the Eastern portion of South Wales, in which "Development Area" facilities are equally available and



the geographical situation is more favourable. Secondly, even where new industry is placed in centres with large numbers of persons permanently suspended from the mining industry, the employment of these is difficult to secure (in the absence of special measures) owing to the employers' preference for:—

- (a) fit rather than even slightly unfit workers;
- (b) cheaper female labour rather than male.

The Working Party believe these difficulties can and must be overcome by the offer of inducements designed to secure:—

- (a) location in the areas concerned;
- (b) employment of the class of labour concerned.

With these objectives in view, they make the following specific proposals.

SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

11. To induce new industries to these areas.

The Working Party are satisfied that, in present conditions of demand for factory space, the provision of Government-owned factories, "ready-to-occupy," would be a substantial inducement to industry. To be effective as an inducement, however, such factories would need to be erected without delay. *They therefore recommend that a small number of factory premises should be built by the Government throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire by the Trading Estate Company, Ltd., immediately, in advance of demand from tenants, in selected areas containing large numbers of disabled unemployed.*

12. To induce firms to employ the workers affected.

They further recommend that the occupation of these special factories should carry with it an obligation to employ a minimum percentage of "disabled persons", as defined by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act, 1944.

13. It does not appear to be administratively practicable to lay down specific quotas or percentages for particular diseases, but they believe that in practice men suspended under the Pneumoconiosis Order would, in fact, under such a scheme, receive an indirect preference. In making up their minimum percentages, employers would naturally tend to select the better types from among the disabled, and so would tend to engage pneumoconiotic and silicotic persons in preference to disabled categories of poor physical condition. They are confirmed in this opinion by the fact that the very men most likely to go down with Pneumoconiosis are those who have been most accustomed to hard and regular work demanding a high degree of adaptability, skill and intelligence.

14. *They consider that for these special factories this minimum percentage should be high and should not be variable by bargaining between the prospective tenant and the Board of Trade. Tentatively they would suggest a minimum of 50 per cent. of the total employed. They believe this can be insisted upon without imposing an undue burden upon the firm; because, insofar as the bulk of the men engaged were silicotic or pneumoconiotic, they would be reasonably fit, able to do a full day's work without the special arrangements and handicaps which might be involved in the employment of a high percentage of crippled or other seriously disabled workers.*

15. Enforcement of this obligation might be secured in several ways. The administrative details are a matter for expert examination, but tentatively they would suggest the obligation to employ at least 50 per cent. of disabled

persons would be an essential condition in the agreement between the tenant, the Board of Trade and The South Wales and Monmouthshire Trading Estate Company, Ltd. Presumably it would also be embodied in the lease as a covenant, breach of which would involve penalty.

16. *They recommend that, by way of recompense for acceptance of the obligation, the rent which would normally be chargeable for these factories should be reduced by a percentage which, again tentatively, they would put at 50 per cent.*

17. *They also consider it would be of great assistance if the Board of Trade in future negotiations with firms leasing any Government-owned factory in the South Wales Development Area other than these special factories, were empowered to adjust the rent by a variable percentage in return for an undertaking by the tenant to employ disabled persons.* The numbers to be employed would of course have to be substantially larger than the quota which the firm would in any case be obliged to employ under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

ADVANTAGES OF THESE PROPOSALS

18. The above recommendations appear to the Working Party to have at least three advantages:—

(i) They would ensure employment for men in areas in which this is highly desirable and otherwise difficult to obtain.

(ii) They would give an indirect but real preference to persons suspended from the Mining Industry.

(iii) They can be brought into operation at once and administered within the framework of existing legislation.

AREAS IN WHICH THE SCHEME SHOULD OPERATE

19. The Working Party have given careful consideration to the amount of factory space required and the districts in which these factories should be located. The geographical distribution of unemployed silicotic and pneumoconiotic persons throughout the South Wales coalfield shows the largest numbers to be at Ammanford, Tumble, Ystalyfera, and Garnant (in the Anthracite area); at Aberdare; and at Tonypany, Porth and Ferndale (in the Rhondda Steam Coal area). New Industrial developments already arranged and in course of negotiation will alleviate the problem in some of these areas, especially if the additional bargaining power which is recommended in para. 7 is conferred on the Board of Trade. *They therefore recommend that, initially, there should be erected special factories of a total area of $\frac{1}{4}$ million sq. ft. These factories should be located at each of the following focal points:—*

(1) AMMANFORD-GARNANT area.

(2) TUMBLE area.

(3) TONYPANDY area.

(4) FERNDAL area.

(5) YSTALYFERA area.

20. It is desired to record appreciation to Mr. D. R. Grenfell, M.P. and his Working Party for the expeditious manner in which they have conducted their investigation and for the valuable contribution they have made towards the rehabilitation of ex-miners in South Wales who suffer from Silicosis and Pneumoconiosis.

APPENDIX I

COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING PARTY

Chairman.

Mr. D. R. Grenfell—M.P. for the Gower Division.

Non-Departmental Members.

Mr. D. J. Williams—M.P. for Neath.

Mr. Evan Phillips (certified Silicotic)—Chairman of the Amalgamated Anthracite Combine Committee.

Mr. David Davies (certified Silicotic)—Secretary of the Amalgamated Anthracite Combine Committee.

Mr. William Lawrence—Aberdare Urban District Council.

Mr. Frank Davies—Ammanford Urban District Council.

Mr. H. Griffiths—Port Talbot Borough Council.

Mr. G. Tracy Phillips—Clerk to the Ammanford U.D.C. and Secretary to the Local Authorities' Conference.

Departmental Members.

Commander R. W. Broadhead—Factory Controller (Location), Board of Trade.

Mr. C. G. Hillier—Wales Regional Office, Ministry of Labour.

Mr. L. N. Hopper—Research Officer, Wales Regional Office, Board of Trade.

Note.

Whilst they were not full members of the Working Party, invaluable assistance was rendered in the course of the Enquiry by:

Mr. R. J. Humphreys—Wales Regional Controller, Ministry of Labour.

Mr. C. S. J. Lovell—Assistant Regional Controller (Wales), Ministry of Labour.

Mr. D. L. Morgans—Deputy Regional Controller (Location), Board of Trade, Wales Regional Office.

Mr. H. J. Finch—Compensation Secretary, South Wales Branch of the National Union of Mineworkers.

APPENDIX II

LIST OF EXPERTS CONSULTED

Dr. McVitie—Silicosis (Medical) Board.

Dr. Price—Silicosis (Medical) Board.

Dr. A. Harper—Radiologist, Ammanford.

Dr. Macmillan—Medical Officer of Health, Ammanford Urban District Council.

Dr. D. Davies—Medical Officer of Health, Cwmamman Urban District Council.

Mr. Evan Williams—Regional Director of Labour, Ministry of Fuel and Power (Wales).

Dr. Jenkins—Medical Officer, Wales Regional Office, Ministry of Fuel and Power.

Mr. D. P. Thomas—Labour Department, Wales Regional Office, Ministry of Fuel and Power.

Mr. A. L. Bannister—Disabled Persons Employment Corporation Ltd.

Mr. T. Boland—Disabled Persons Employment Corporation Ltd.