

period. It was apparent that no wholesale removal of controls could take place immediately, but that relaxation must be a gradual process to smooth over the change from wartime to peacetime activities as much as possible.

312. It was therefore decided that the earliest practicable relaxations would take the form of the revocation of a number of declarations of essentiality covering industries whose priorities were directly and immediately affected by the cessation of hostilities. This could be followed by a limited exemption of certain classes from further man-power direction and their release from other current man-power obligations. A close watch would be maintained on the effects of these relaxations, and further progressive exemptions and revocations could proceed as circumstances permitted. A provisional schedule for these progressive relaxations was drawn up, and in the main it proved possible to adhere to this.

(ii) Revocation of Declarations of Essentiality

313. In the light of its quickly finalized survey of the position in different industries the Department was able to draw up a programme for the review of declarations of essentiality by certain large groups, commencing with munitions and other work whose priority must cease with the end of hostilities, but leaving over the following groups which, it was evident, would require protection for a longer period than other industries :—

- (a) Production for purposes of meeting the essential requirements of returned servicemen.
- (b) Production necessary to maintain supplies to Britain and Europe and to the Armed Forces, or to meet Government commitments to UNRRA and the Netherlands East Indies, &c.
- (c) Production or services which had serious arrears to be overtaken in order to ensure maximum safety or well-being—e.g., removal of electrical fire hazards, removal of dangers to public health from defective plumbing or drainage, the provision of housing, &c.
- (d) Production or services of a key nature which would fail unless labour continued to be safeguarded—e.g., coal-production, gasworks, transport, accommodation and meal facilities, and the maintenance of hospitals and mental hospitals, &c.
- (e) Production or services in which special difficulties in the reabsorption of demobilized servicemen were anticipated if wartime staff were dispersed and replaced by permanent staff from civilian sources before demobilization occurred.

314. In regard to declarations not contained within the above classes those which appeared *prima facie* to have the least claim for retention were selected with the view to immediate revocation. An opportunity was first given to the employers concerned to express their opinions on the need for the continuation of coverage, while at the same time appropriate associations of employers, unions of workers, Man-power Utilization Committees, and Controllers were also consulted. Before finally arriving at a decision to revoke any particular declaration the views of these interested parties were fully weighed. Some cases arose where postponement of revocation beyond the date originally scheduled was necessary, but in the main that schedule was maintained.

315. Opposition to the removal of declarations was encountered from some groups of employers and from various individual employers. This was due partly to a fear that labour would leave them as soon as it was free to do so and that they would be unable to replace it, and partly to two misconceptions in the early stages of revocations. These misconceptions were—

(a) Fears were expressed by some employers that as soon as they lost the protection of essentiality, District Man-power Officers would proceed to direct their staff to undertakings still remaining essential. These fears were dispelled, however, by a policy statement by Government assuring employers that no discrimination would be made against those firms which lost their cover of essentiality, and that while their staffs were still liable to periodic review as in the past, the Department had no intention of arbitrarily directing staff away from them merely because their declarations had been revoked. The fairly steep tapering-off of the use of directions (discussed below) which accompanied the removal of declarations actually meant that very few directions continued to be issued.

(b) Employers in many cases also were apprehensive that removal of declarations would adversely affect their priority in the obtaining of materials and supplies. It was necessary to explain to these firms that the declaration of essentiality was related only to the man-power angle and had no connection whatsoever with the allocation of essential materials.