

COAL INDUSTRY COMMISSION.

VOL. I.

REPORTS AND MINUTES OF EVIDENCE ON THE FIRST STAGE OF THE INQUIRY.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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[Cd. 9120] of Session 1917-18. Price 1s. (1s. 2½d.).

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[Cmd. 3] of Session 1919. Price 4d. (5d.).

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[Cmd. 4] of Session 1919. Price 3d. (4½d.).

PART IV. COLONIAL AND FOREIGN STATISTICS. (*Suspended during the War.*)

COAL INDUSTRY COMMISSION ACT, 1919.

FIRST STAGE.

INTERIM REPORT, March 20, 1919, by the Hon. Mr. Justice Sankey, G.B.E. (*Chairman*); Mr. Arthur Balfour; Sir Arthur Duckham, K.C.B., M.I.C.E.; and Sir Thomas Royden, Bart. M.P.

[Cmd. 84] of Session 1919. Price 1d. (2d.).

REPORT, March 20, 1919, by Messrs. R. Smillie, Frank Hodges, and Herbert Smith, Sir Leo Chiozza Money; Messrs. R. H. Tawney, and Sidney Webb.

[Cmd. 85] of Session 1919. Price 2d. (3d.).

INTERIM REPORT, March 20, 1919, by Messrs. R. W. Cooper; J. T. Forgie; and Evan Williams.

[Cmd. 86] of Session 1919. Price 1d. (1½d.).

COAL INDUSTRY COMMISSION.

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1919.

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The Reports of the Commissioners are also obtainable under the following Command Numbers :

Interim Reports, dated 20th March, 1919, by :—

- (a) The Honourable Mr. JUSTICE SANKEY, G.B.E. (*Chairman*), Mr. ARTHUR BALFOUR, Sir ARTHUR DUCKHAM, K.C.B., M.I.C.E., and Sir THOMAS ROYDEN, BART., M.P. [Cmd. 84.]
- (b) Messrs. R. SMILLIE, FRANK HODGES and HERBERT SMITH, Sir LEO CHIOZZA MONEY, Messrs. R. H. TAWNEY and SIDNEY WEBB. [Cmd. 85.]
- (c) Messrs. R. W. COOPER, J. T. FORGIE and EVAN WILLIAMS. [Cmd. 86.]

Second Stage Reports, dated 20th June, 1919. [Cmd. 210.]

The Minutes of Evidence on the Second Stage of the Inquiry are obtainable under Cmd. 360.

The Appendices to the Evidence (both Stages) are obtainable under Cmd. 361.

1. LIST OF COMMISSIONERS.

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE SANKEY, G.B.E. (*Chairman*).

ARTHUR BALFOUR, ESQ.

R. W. COOPER, ESQ.

SIR ARTHUR DUCKHAM, K.C.B., M.I.C.E.

J. T. FORGIE, ESQ.

FRANK HODGES, ESQ.

SIR LEO CHIOZZA MONEY.

SIR THOMAS ROYDEN, BART., M.P.

ROBERT SMILLIE, ESQ.

HERBERT SMITH, ESQ.

R. H. TAWNEY, ESQ.

SIDNEY WEBB, ESQ.

EVAN WILLIAMS, ESQ.

ASSESSORS TO THE COMMISSION.

S. J. CHAPMAN, ESQ., C.B., C.B.E.

SIR RICHARD A. S. REDMAYNE, K.C.B., M.I.C.E.

H. J. WILSON, ESQ., C.B.E.

Secretary: Mr. ARNOLD D. McNAIR, C.B.E.

Assistant Secretary: MR. GILBERT STONE.

38854

2. COAL INDUSTRY COMMISSION ACT, 1919.

[9 GEO. 5. CH. 1.]

A.D. 1919.

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS.

Section.

1. Appointment of Commissioners.
2. Powers of Commissioners.
3. Publicity of proceedings.
4. Disclosure of confidential information.
5. Reports.
6. Short title.

CHAPTER 1.

An Act to constitute a Commission to inquire into the position of and conditions prevailing in the Coal Industry. [26th February, 1919.]

BE it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. His Majesty shall have power to appoint Commissioners, consisting of a chairman, who shall be a judge of the Supreme Court, a vice-chairman, and such other persons as His Majesty may think fit, for the purpose of inquiring into the position of, and conditions prevailing in, the coal industry, and in particular as to—

- (a) the wages and hours of work in the various grades of colliery workers, and whether and, if so, to what extent, and by what method, such wages should be increased and hours reduced, regard being had to a reasonable standard of living amongst the colliery workers, and to the effect of such changes on the economic life of the country;
- (b) any inequalities between different grades of colliery workers as regards wages, hours of work, and other conditions, and whether and, if so, to what extent any of these inequalities are unjustifiable and capable of remedy;
- (c) the cost of production and distribution in the coal industry, or any industry commonly carried on in connection therewith or as ancillary or incidental thereto, and the general organisation of the coalfield and the industry as a whole;
- (d) selling prices and profits in the coal industry, or any industry commonly carried on in connection therewith or as ancillary or incidental thereto;
- (e) the social conditions under which colliery workers carry on their industry;
- (f) any scheme that may be submitted to or formulated by the Commissioners for the future organisation of the coal industry, whether on the present basis, or on the basis of joint control, nationalisation, or any other basis;
- (g) the effect of the present incidence of, and practice in regard to, mining royalties and way-leaves upon the coal industry and the cost of coal, and whether any and what changes in these respects are desirable;
- (h) the effect of proposals under the above heads upon the development of the coal industry and the economic life of the country.

2.—(1) The Commissioners appointed under this Act (in this Act referred to as "the Commissioners") shall have all such powers, rights, and privileges as are vested in the High Court or in any judge thereof, on the occasion of any action, in respect of the following matters:—

- (a) discovery and production to the Commissioners of documents, and for the purposes thereof the Commissioners shall have power to appoint and employ accountants and other experts to make such investigations and reports as they shall order; and
- (b) enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation, or otherwise; and

Appoint-
ment of
Commis-
sioners.

Powers of
Commis-
sioners.

(c) compelling the production of documents; and

(d) punishing persons guilty of contempt;

and a summons signed by one or more of the Commissioners may be substituted for and shall be equivalent to any formal process capable of being issued in any action for enforcing the attendance of witnesses and compelling the production of documents.

(2) A warrant of committal to prison issued for the purpose of enforcing the powers conferred by this section shall specify the prison to which the offender is to be committed, but shall not authorise the imprisonment of an offender for a period exceeding three months.

(3) Persons interested in the inquiry shall not be entitled to appear before the Commissioners by counsel or solicitor unless it appears desirable to the Commissioners to allow any such appearance for special reasons.

(4) The Commissioners may act notwithstanding any vacancy in their number, and three shall be a quorum.

(5) Every document purporting to be an order or other instrument issued by the Commissioners may be authenticated by the signature of any one or more of the Commissioners.

(6) The Commissioners shall have power to appoint committees for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting to the Commissioners on any of the matters referred to the Commissioners under this Act, and any such Committee may include, if the Commissioners think fit, persons other than Commissioners, and the Commissioners may delegate to any such Committee, for the purposes of such inquiry and report, any of the powers conferred on the Commissioners under this Act.

3.—(1) The Commissioners may, in their discretion, refuse to allow the public or any portion of the public to be present at any proceedings of the Commissioners during the hearing of evidence of matters which, but for this Act, could not be disclosed, but, save as aforesaid, the sittings of the Commissioners at which evidence is taken shall be held in public; and a full and complete record in shorthand shall be kept of all evidence taken whether in public or in private.

Publicity of proceedings.

(2) If any person who is present at any proceedings of the Commissioners at which the public or any portion thereof are not allowed to be present discloses, without the authority of the Commissioners, either directly or indirectly, anything that has taken place at those proceedings, he shall be liable to punishment for contempt of court.

4. A person examined as a witness or summoned to produce documents by the Commissioners shall not be excused from producing any document or giving any information on the ground that such document or information is secret or confidential, or is entitled or required to be withheld under section two of the Official Secrets Act, 1911, or under the Coal Mines Control Agreement (Confirmation) Act, 1918, or the agreement thereto scheduled, or otherwise, and section four of the last-mentioned Act shall not apply to the Commissioners or any person concerned in the inquiry.

Disclosure of confidential information.
7 & 2 Geo. 5.
1 28.
c. & 8 Geo. 5.
c. 56.

5. Any report of the Commissioners and any minority report shall be laid as soon as may be before both Houses of Parliament, and the Commissioners may, if they think fit, make interim reports, and shall, as soon as practicable, make an interim report on the questions of the wages and hours of work of colliery workers, and the Commissioners may publish, or cause to be published, from time to time, in such manner as they think fit, any information obtained or conclusions arrived at by them as the result or in the course of their inquiry:

Reports.

Provided that there shall not be included in any report or publication made or authorised by the Commissioners any information obtained by them in the course of their inquiry as to any individual business (whether carried on by a person, firm or company) which but for this Act could not have been disclosed, nor shall any individual Commissioner or any person concerned in the inquiry disclose any such information.

6. This Act may be cited as the Coal Industry Commission Act, 1919.

Short title.

3. ROYAL WARRANTS OF APPOINTMENT.

GEORGE R.I.

(Stamp 10/-)

GEORGE THE FIFTH, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, to our Trusty and Well-beloved:—

Sir JOHN SANKEY, Knight Grand Cross of Our Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, one of the Judges of the King's Bench Division of Our High Court of Justice;
 Sir ARTHUR McDUGAL DUCKHAM, Knight Commander of Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath;
 Sir ALLAN MACGREGOR SMITH, Knight Commander of Our Most Excellent Order of the British Empire;
 Sir LEO CHIOZZA MONEY, Knight; and
 ARTHUR BALFOUR,
 ROBERT WATSON COOPER,
 JAMES TENNANT FORGIE,
 FRANK HODGES,
 ROBERT SMILLIE,
 HERBERT SMITH,
 RICHARD HENRY TAWNEY,
 SIDNEY WEBB, and
 EVAN WILLIAMS, Esquires,

Greeting.

(L.S.)

Whereas by an Act passed in the Ninth year of Our Reign, intituled " An Act to constitute a Commission to inquire into the position of and conditions prevailing in the Coal Industry " it is, amongst other things, enacted that We shall have power to appoint Commissioners for the purposes of the said Act:

Now know ye that We, pursuant to the powers so vested in Us, have appointed, and do by these Presents appoint you the said Sir John Sankey (Chairman), Sir Arthur McDougal Duckham, Sir Allan MacGregor Smith, Sir Leo Chiozza Money, Arthur Balfour, Robert Watson Cooper, James Tennant Forgie, Frank Hodges, Robert Smillie, Herbert Smith, Richard Henry Tawney, Sidney Webb and Evan Williams to be Commissioners for the purposes of the said Act.

Given at Our Court at Windsor the twenty-sixth day of April, 1919, in the Ninth Year of Our Reign.

By His Majesty's Command.

EDWARD SHORTT.

Warrant appointing Commissioners under the Coal Industry Commission Act, 1919.

GEORGE R.I.

(Stamp 10/-)

GEORGE THE FIFTH, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, KING, Defender of the Faith, To Our Trusty and well-beloved Sir Adam Nimmo, Knight Commander of Our Most Excellent Order of the British Empire,

Greeting.

KNOW YE that We reposing great trust and confidence in your knowledge and ability do by these Presents appoint you the said Sir Adam Nimmo to be a Member of the Coal Industry Commission in the room of James Tennant Forgie, Esquire, who has resigned.

Given at Our Court at Windsor the Eighth day of May, 1919, In the Tenth Year of Our Reign.

(L.S.)

By His Majesty's Command.

EDWARD SHORTT.

Sir ADAM NIMMO, K.B.E.,
 To be a Member of the Coal
 Industry Commission.

4 (a) INTERIM REPORT.

4 (A). INTERIM REPORT BY THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE SANKEY (*Chairman*),
MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR, SIR ARTHUR DUCKHAM, AND SIR THOMAS ROYDEN,
BART.

DATED 20TH MARCH, 1919.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY.

We have the honour to present our Interim Report in pursuance of the Coal Industry Commission Act, 1919.

The Report is divided into three parts:—

- (1) The Recommendations.
 - (2) The Report.
 - (3) The Evidence.
-

THE RECOMMENDATIONS.

AS TO HOURS AND WAGES.

I.

We recommend that the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1908, commonly called the Eight Hours Act, be amended by the substitution, in the clauses limiting the hours of work underground, of the word "seven" for the word "eight" as and from July 16th, 1919, and, subject to the economic position of the industry at the end of 1920, by the substitution of the word "six" for the word "eight" as and from July 13th, 1921. Certain adjustments must be made in the hours of the classes of underground workers specifically mentioned in the Act.

II.

We recommend that as from July 16th, 1919, the hours of work of persons employed on the surface at or about collieries shall be forty-six and a half working hours per week, exclusive of meal-times, the details to be settled locally.

III.

We recommend an increase of wages of two shillings per shift worked or per day worked in the case of the classes of colliery workers, employed in coal mines or at the pit-heads of coal mines, whose wages have in the past been regulated by colliery sliding scales. In the case of workers under 16 years of age, the advance is to be one shilling.

IV.

We recommend the continuation of the Coal Mines Control Agreement (Confirmation) Act, 1918, subject to certain suggestions indicated in our Report.

V.

The result of these Recommendations will mean :—

- (1) A shortening of the working day underground by one hour from July 16th, 1919, and probably by a further hour from July 13th, 1921.
- (2) A distribution of an additional sum of £30,000,000 per annum as wages among the colliery workers.

VI.

It is thought that these results may be obtained, as explained in our Report, without raising the price of coal to the consumer.

AS TO NATIONALIZATION.

VII.

By Section 5 of the Coal Industry Commission Act, 1919, it is provided that the Commissioners shall as soon as practicable make an Interim Report on the questions of the wages and hours of work of colliery workers.

By Section 1 (f) it is provided that the Commissioners shall enquire into any scheme that may be submitted to or formulated by them for the future organisation of the coal industry, whether on the present basis, or on the basis of joint control, nationalization, or any other basis.

VIII.

The Prime Minister promised in the House of Commons on Tuesday, the 25th February, that a decision as to the two issues of wages and hours should be arrived at, if possible, by March 20th. (*See Hansard, Wednesday, 26th February—pages 1694, 1695 and 1698.*) The promise to furnish this Interim Report on wages and hours by March 20th has been redeemed.

IX.

Even upon the evidence already given, the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned, and some other system must be substituted for it, either nationalization or a method of unification by national purchase and/or by joint control.

X.

To some of our colleagues whose opinion we greatly value, nationalization has been the study or ambition of a lifetime, and they are prepared at once to report in its favour.

XI.

We understand that to others, whose opinion we equally value, some scheme of joint control appears to be a solution of the problem.

XII.

No detailed scheme for nationalization has as yet been submitted to the Commissioners; nor has any scheme for joint control been placed before them.

XIII.

No sufficient evidence has as yet been tendered, and no sufficient criticism has as yet been made, to show whether nationalization or a method of unification by national purchase and/or by joint control is best in the interests of the country and its export trade, the workers, and the owners.

XIV.

We are not prepared to report now one way or the other upon evidence which is at present insufficient and after a time which is wholly inadequate, nor are we prepared to give now a momentous decision upon a point which affects every citizen in this country; nor, as appears from the report in Hansard above referred to, did our Chairman ever pledge himself to do so.

XV.

We are prepared, however, to report now that it is in the interests of the country that the colliery worker shall in the future have an effective voice in the direction of the mine. For a generation the colliery worker has been educated socially and technically. The result is a great national asset. Why not use it?

XVI.

We are further prepared to report now that the economies which should be effected by improved methods would be in the interests of the country and should result in the industry yielding even better terms for the colliery workers than those which we are at present able to recommend, and at the same time yielding a fair and just return to the capital employed.

XVII.

We think that the result of the colliery workers having an effective voice in the direction of the mine, coupled with the better terms just referred to, will enable them to reach a higher standard of living to which, in our view, they are entitled, and which many of them do not now enjoy.

XVIII.

We think nothing but good can come from public discussion between workers and owners, and also from private deliberations between them. There has been too much secrecy in the past.

XIX.

It must not, however, be forgotten that after all the question of nationalization or a method of unification by national purchase and/or by joint control, is ultimately one of policy to be determined by Parliament and not by this Commission, although this Commission will be able to consider and report upon the various schemes or suggestions which may be put forward as a final solution of the problem.

XX.

There is one further subject which, although it forms no part of the promised Interim Report, is of so urgent a character that we feel it our duty to draw public attention to it.

XXI.

Evidence has been placed before the Commission as to the housing accommodation of the colliery workers in various districts. Although it is true that there is good housing accommodation in certain districts—and to some extent—there are houses in some districts which are a reproach to our civilization. No judicial language is sufficiently strong or sufficiently severe to apply to their condemnation.

XXII.

It is a matter for careful consideration whether a 1d. per ton should not be at once collected on coal raised and applied to improve the housing and meanities of each particular colliery district.

A 1d. per ton on our present output means about £1,000,000 a year.

XXIII.

When this Commission meets again it ought, in our opinion, to continue to make Interim Reports with suggestions as to the different ways in which economies and improvements in the coal industry can be effected, and power should be given under which these reports could be immediately acted upon.

XXIV.

It would be impossible to present one final Report for some months, and then a similar period would probably elapse before Parliament would be able to deal with it.

XXV.

By a series of Interim Reports containing suggestions which could be immediately acted upon and tested, it would be possible to start at once a scheme for the reconstruction of the industry with a view to putting it eventually upon an efficient basis.

XXVI.

It is suggested that the best method of proceeding would be to make these reports as rapidly as possible, and at short intervals, so that at the end of a period, say of six months, it would be seen, after due trial, whether these suggestions are worthy of being permanently adopted in the Act of Parliament which must eventually be sought to secure the re-organisation of the industry.

THE REPORT.

1. The popular title—Eight Hours Act—of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1908, is to some extent misleading. The Bill as it originally left the House of Commons provided, after the lapse of five years, for eight hours exclusive of one winding, but the Act, as eventually passed, provides for eight hours exclusive of both windings. In other words, the time both for lowering and for raising the workmen is outside the eight hours. In the result many workmen are down the pit for a very much longer period than eight hours, the average for the whole country being eight hours and thirty-nine minutes.

2. The question of reducing the hours of colliery workers is a serious and difficult one: serious because it must admittedly reduce output, difficult because it is a matter almost of impossibility to estimate how much it would reduce output.

It would be, in our view, too dangerous an experiment in these circumstances to recommend a two hours' reduction at once, and we have had great difficulty in coming to the conclusion whether it is better to recommend at once a true Eight Hours Act as originally intended or the substitution, first, of seven hours and, later, of six hours for eight in the present Act.

We have come to the conclusion that the latter is the better course because it will not tempt persons to put men down and bring them up too rapidly—a system which might lead to more accidents.

The reason for recommending the further reduction in July, 1921, is that we think we are justified in assuming that in two years the output should have reached, by the united efforts of all concerned, the amount of coal raised in 1913, namely, 287 million tons.

3. The seven hours Act will mean that the men are underground, taking the average, seven hours and thirty-nine minutes, and relying upon the valuable and weighty advice of Sir Richard Redmayne, the Chief Inspector of Mines, the estimated decrease in output will be a little under 10 per cent. per annum.

4. We think that it is too dangerous to the consumer and to the country to recommend the full demand of 30 per cent., which would require £45,000,000, although it is a demand which, after a time, might, and probably could, be conceded.

5. We recommend an increase in wage to all colliery workers of two shillings and one shilling a day, respectively, for each day worked, and our reason for this and the result of the reduction of hours and the increase of wages will be found below. The reason two shillings and one shilling are recommended instead of a percentage is that it remunerates the lower paid worker in a fairer degree and, after all, the necessities of life are no cheaper to him than they are to his more highly paid comrade.

6. We do not think it is possible to recommend that the reductions in hours should come into immediate effect. It will be remembered that the Eight Hours Act did not come into force in Northumberland and Durham until after a year had elapsed, and elsewhere until after six months had elapsed. Consequently, we recommend the reductions in hours as above set out.

7. The estimated cost of this increase in wages and reduction in hours will be as follows for the remainder of this present year:—

Cost:—

Wages increase	= £30,000,000
Decreased output at 10 per cent. over six months, making, say, 250,000,000 tons for the present year	= £13,000,000

8. It will therefore be seen that to meet the decreased hours and the increased wage a sum of £43,000,000 is required this year. To meet this it is proposed, through the machinery of the Coal Mines Control Agreement, as amended for the purpose, to allow the coalowners to retain 1s. 2d. per ton of coal raised.

9. The difference between 1s. 2d. per ton thus allowed to the owners (which equals, on an output of 250,000,000 tons, £15,000,000) and the profit that might have been earned on the present basis of wages and hours, or £54,000,000, is £39,000,000.

10. It is, however, certain that the present price of coal to neutrals cannot be maintained, but that it will fall to an amount which may represent for the remainder of the year on the neutral tonnage a loss of about £9,000,000 on present prices. The £39,000,000, less £9,000,000, leaves £30,000,000 towards the £43,000,000 necessary to be provided this year for the decrease

in hours and the increase in wages; in other words, a deficit of £13,000,000. This deficit it is hoped to make up by various economies, *e.g.*—

- (i) The miners' leaders have pledged themselves to do their best to prevent voluntary absenteeism at the mines, and we rely, and we think we are right in relying, upon the honour of the miners to do in peace what they have already done in war, that is to say, to flock to the assistance of the country.
- (ii) If the 10 per cent. estimated reduction of output can be decreased and if the output of the first year of the war, namely, 1914, 266,000,000 tons, can be maintained, the difficulty of finding the money will be greatly minimised.

11. Again, the coal-owners in their turn should do everything in their power, by improved methods of coal-getting and underground travelling, to save labour and lengthen the actual time spent at the face.

12. Again, economies

- (a) in production,
- (b) in transit,
- (c) in distribution,

can undoubtedly be effected, although it is difficult to place any money value upon them at the present moment.

13. This Commission should not at its future meetings discuss questions at large, but should concentrate itself upon particular economies and improvements and make its report upon each, and have the suggestions carried into operation through the machinery of the Coal Control, so that they may be immediately tested.

It will probably be found necessary to have a short Act of Parliament for this purpose very much upon the lines of Section 3, sub-section (i) of the Bill to Establish a Ministry of Ways and Communications, which is now before the House of Commons.

14. One of the early problems to be taken in hand by the Commission should be the question of royalties and wayleaves.

15. Finally, it is strongly urged that these matters should be taken in hand at once by discussing and putting into operation units of economy and units of improvement without waiting months and months for a full and complete scheme to be placed before and passed by Parliament.

The following are indications of some of the units to be decided on immediately:—

- (i) Housing.
- (ii) Baths at the pit-head.
- (iii) Clearance.
- (iv) Continuity of transport from the colliery.
- (v) Reduction of voluntary absenteeism.
- (vi) Use of machinery in mines:—
 - (a) Coal-cutting.
 - (b) Coal-conveying.
 - (c) Underground transit.
- (vii) Pooling of wagons.
- (viii) Elimination of unnecessary distribution costs.
- (ix) Uniformity of accounting.

16. The Recommendations and Report do not refer to Ireland.

All of which we humbly report for Your Majesty's gracious consideration.

JOHN SANKEY (*Chairman*).
A. BALFOUR
ARTHUR DUCKHAM.
T. ROYDEN.

WITNESS:—

ARNOLD D. McNAIR (*Secretary*).
GILBERT STONE (*Assistant Secretary*).

20th March, 1919.

APPENDIX.

The following Table shows the various items of cost and profit on a ton of Derbyshire coal from its place underground to the time it reaches the consumer's cellar in London :—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Royalties	0	4		
Wages	13	5		
Supplies and Stores	3	6		
Administration	0	5		
Depreciation	0	4		
Owner's Profit	2	5		
Coal Controller's Profit	0	9		
	—		21	2

This 21*s.* 2*d.* is for coal as it comes from the pit. For household purposes it is screened to some extent, which makes the price of the best coal 23*s.* 5*d.* at the pit.

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Pit-head price (screened)	23	5		
Railway Rate	6	3		
Wagon Hire	1	6		
Factor's charge	0	4		
Merchant's charge :—			<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Labour			4	3
Cartage			2	10
Establishment Charges			3	4
Wastage			0	7
			<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Management and Interest	0	3		
Profit	1	3		
	—		1	6
	—		12	6
Total	—		44	0

4 (b) INTERIM REPORT.

4 (B) INTERIM REPORT SUBMITTED BY MESSRS. R. SMILLIE, FRANK HODGES, AND HERBERT SMITH, SIR LEO CHIOZZA MONEY, MESSRS. R. H. TAWNEY AND SIDNEY WEBB.

DATED 20TH MARCH, 1919.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS.

1. We find that the miners' claim for an advance in the standard of life is justified; and that the percentage of rise of wages asked for, namely 30 per cent. (on earnings apart from war wage), is not excessive.
2. We find justified the claim to a substitution in the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1908 of six for eight (making the future maximum working day underground vary from about 6½ hours in some mines to 8½ hours in others, and averaging nearly 7 hours). A corresponding shortening of the working day should apply to the surface workers.
3. We find justified the miners' claim for a more efficient organisation of their industry—the individual ownership of collieries being officially declared to be “wasteful and extravagant,” whilst the method of retail distribution is unnecessarily costly; and in view of the impossibility of tolerating any unification of all the mines in the hands of a Capitalist Trust we think that, in the interest of the consumers as much as in that of the miners, nationalisation ought to be, in principle, at once determined on.
4. As to the claims in respect of miners demobilised from the Army, we think that it would be better for these to be dealt with along with the cases of men in other industries.

REPORT.

In presenting an Interim Report in accordance with Section 5 of the Statute, we have confined ourselves to wages and the hours of labour, including the considerations which in our judgment are necessarily involved therein, in order to enable the Government to come to a decision upon the proposals out of which the Commission arose. These proposals took the form of applications for—

- (a) the nationalisation of the coal supply for which the Miners' Federation has been pressing since 1910;
- (b) a reduction in the miners' hours of work;
- (c) a general increase in their remuneration; and
- (d) improved arrangements for the miners demobilised from the Army.

The applications were made in the first instance by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, representing the desires and opinions of what is evidently the great majority, possibly nine-tenths, of the eleven hundred thousand men and youths normally employed in or about the 3,300 mines, who comprise with their families between four and five million persons. What we have to deal with—the most extensive single movement in the industrial history of this country—is, accordingly, scarcely to be classed with the sectional demands made on the employers in particular trades for particular concessions. It is a comprehensive appeal submitted to the Government and public opinion, by not less than one-tenth of the entire population of the United Kingdom—equalling in numerical magnitude the whole of Ireland, if not the whole of Scotland—not only for an advance in their standard of life, but also such re-organisation of their industry as may enable this advance to be granted without imposing any unfair charge upon the rest of the community.

THE EFFECT UPON OUTPUT.

The miners' plea is essentially one for justice. They claim that the conditions under which they live and work are not such as the conscience of the nation can approve; that their wages, reckoned in commodities, are now actually less than before the war; that the way in which they and their families are housed is, in the majority of cases, nothing less than scandalous; that in spite of their convincing public opinion and the House of Commons in 1908 that so much toil was excessive, the so-called Eight Hours Act of that year was, through Parliamentary exigencies, finally couched in such terms as practically to impose on them, unknown to the public, a working day underground of nine, and in some cases even more than ten hours, and that these are still their hours of labour; that thousands of them who have been totally incapacitated by accidents are existing on Workmen's Compensation Act allowances of no more than half their pre-war wages, with a statutory maximum of 20*s.* (now 25*s.*) per week, which the rise in the cost of living has made insufficient for maintenance; that during the war they have foregone all movements for an improvement in their conditions, although under the accustomed Conciliation Board arrangements some of the districts would have normally become entitled to advances even exceeding what is now asked for; and that taking into account the arduous and hazardous nature of their calling in comparison with workmen in other industries, whose hours of labour have lately been reduced, and whose rates of pay have been increased, they are equitably entitled to such an increased share of the product of their industry as will afford them a substantial advance in their standard of life.

We think that these claims are, broadly speaking, justified. Notwithstanding the fact that the miners' calling is one of those to which public opinion and the House of Commons readily concede exceptional consideration, we cannot avoid the conclusion that it has now fallen behind some other industries. But even in doing justice we cannot rightly ignore what may be the economic effects of our decisions upon the industry itself, upon the nation's trade, and upon the whole community of consumers. It is fair to say that the Miners' Federation does not overlook this point; and it is, we apprehend, very largely on this ground that its application for improvements in wages and hours is inextricably bound up with its claim that the existing methods of organisation, both of the production and distribution of coal, are so extravagant and wasteful, and result at present in so many unnecessary charges on the industry, as easily to permit both of greater productivity and of a lower cost per ton to the consumer. It is accordingly, in our judgment, impossible, in dealing with their claims, to separate nationalisation from hours and wages. We shall recur to the subject of the output of coal; but we now proceed to the several claims, beginning with that for a 30 per cent. advance on the existing earnings of all men and boys in or about the mines (apart from the flat-rate war wage of 3*s.* per day for adults and 1*s.* 6*d.* per day for boys under 16).

THE ADVANCE REQUIRED TO PREVENT A FALL IN WAGES.

We do not think that it is commonly realised that, taking all classes and districts together, the workers in and about coal-mines have not received any advance in their real wages since 1914, but have, on the contrary, actually suffered a diminution. The official statistics supplied to us show that the average money wages since 1914 have risen from £82 to £169 per head (in both cases subject to the reduction of a small sum for employers' deductions), or 106 per cent., whereas the Ministry of Labour report shows an estimated rise in food prices to March, 1919, of 120 per cent., and in the cost of living of the wage-earning class, assuming the same commodities and services to be purchased in the same quantities, of 115 per cent. From this should be deducted, in the case of most of the miners, the small part of this percentage which results from the increased cost of household coal. It is not generally understood that, in the case of the hewers and other grades receiving more than the average pay, the operation of the flat-rate war wage makes the percentage of increase much below this figure. Taking the average daily earnings of piecework coal-getters in all districts in 1914 at 8*s.* 10*d.* per day, and now at 14*s.* plus 3*s.* war wage, the percentage of increase in money wages is only 92½, as against 115 per cent. in the cost of living.

It was in recognition of this decline in real wages which the miners (and especially the hewers) have suffered, that the recent Government proposal was made of a general advance of a shilling per day all round—involving an annual charge of about thirteen million pounds—and that it was to be made retrospective to the 9th January last, involving an additional gift of a couple of million pounds. We do not think that this proposal was either adequate, or wisely conceived, but the fact that it was to be made retrospective (without the miners putting forward any such request) indicates how seriously the financial loss to the miners was estimated by the Government.

AN ADVANCE IN THE STANDARD OF LIFE.

But the miners ask not merely that their money wages should be adjusted to the cost of living, so as to prevent any retrogression in their standard of life, but also that an advance in that standard should be conceded to them. We find this request a reasonable one, in view not only of the circumstances of the miners' vocation, but also of the advance in the standard of life which has been secured by some other organised sections of the wage-earners, as compared

with five years ago. What is more important, such an advance, if it can be conceded without economic disaster, appears to us to be a positive advantage to the community as a whole. The public is constantly being misled in this connection by reports, usually exaggerated, of the large earnings of the hewers. It is not remembered that these earnings of hewers as reported (a) are frequently those, not of one but often of two, and occasionally of three, persons; (b) are subject to charges, varying in different districts, for such things as explosives, lights and tools, and the cost of pit clothes and pit boots; (c) are often the exceptional gains of a specially good "place," to be offset presently by the scanty returns of a bad place; (d) are never continuous throughout the year, practically no hewer getting employment for more than 270 days. But, apart from this, it is seldom remembered that the hewers, or other persons actually getting the coal, constitute only 30 per cent. of the persons employed in or about the mines, and fewer than half of the underground workers, whilst all the other classes receive considerably lower wages. Before the war, it has been proved to us, whilst the hewers earned, in the different districts on an average, from 5s. 9d. (in Somerset) to 10s. 3d. (in South Yorkshire) per day, the majority of other mine workers (adults) earned, on an average, only from 4s. 6d. to 7s. 2d. per day. The general average earnings of the eleven hundred thousand miners in 1913 (including all the hewers) is officially given as £82, or 31s. 6d. per week, less a few pence weekly for employers' deductions. We venture to assert that the nation will not consider that this is an adequate wage for the miner, or that it is such as to afford the miners' family a proper standard of life. *That average wage is, measured in commodities, actually lower to-day than it was in 1914, and in the case of the hewers much lower.*

The poverty which this implies is unfortunately very strikingly manifested in the house that our civilisation allows to the miner and his family. We cannot ascertain the statistics for England and Wales, but it seems clear that a large proportion of the miners in Scotland are living under the soul-destroying conditions of a single-room home, whilst probably a large majority of them have no more than two rooms. In England and Wales overcrowding, as defined by statute, is apparently much more prevalent in mining districts than elsewhere. Nor can it be said that, except in a few special cases, a mining village, as it exists to-day, is, in the standard of life that it permits to this not unimportant proportion of the nation's families, a credit to the community. Yet it is in these mining villages that one-tenth of all the nation's children are born and reared.

We suggest that this is of the essence of the question. No nation can, in these days, escape disaster which permits any large section of its people no more ennobling conditions of life, no nearer approach to civilisation, than many a village in the mining districts—to name only some—of South Wales or Lanarkshire, Warwickshire or Staffordshire. We grant, of course, that much else is required than a mere increase in wages, and that wages are not always wisely expended. But, taking all in all, the standard of life in this country has so far risen, step by step, with every general advance in wages; and, whilst much else needs to be done, there is no better or safer way of mitigating the narrow penury that to-day cramps the manual worker's life, and too often stands in the way of his children's development, than progressive advances in wages. The nation could make no better investment, even in these days of financial anxiety, than one which opens up to any considerable proportion of its children the chances of better education and longer training, and to any section of its manual workers the opportunities for a wider, fuller and freer life. As a matter of fact, we have it in evidence in the figures of the official statistician that, taking by itself the miners' claim to an advance of wages, the whole of it could be conceded, *if only all the concerns were financially unified*, when the full number of men are back at work in the mines, if the aggregate pre-war output is obtained, apart from any economies in production or distribution, *out of the excess profits of the colliery companies at their present rate* (allowing for a drastic fall in export prices), without trenching by a single penny on their quite substantial profits of the pre-war year.

A REDUCTION IN THE HOURS OF LABOUR.

The claim of the miners for a substantial reduction of their hours of labour evokes general sympathy, although some misapprehension has been caused by the phrase "six-hour day." It is not true that the miners already have an eight-hour day secured to them by Act of Parliament. The statute of 1908, not as introduced by the Government and passed by the House of Commons, but as altered at the very end of the Session by the House of Lords, made the eight hours date from the moment the *last* man of each shift entered the cage to descend the shaft, until the *first* man of the shift reached the surface; thus excluding all the "winding time," which normally consumes on an average something like an hour, and in the most extreme cases officially reported to us by the inspectors takes as much as two and a half hours per day. The underground worker is thus actually below ground, exposed to a special risk of accident, not for eight, but, as we are informed officially, for between 8½ and 10½ hours per day. What the Act of Parliament calls an eight-hours day is, in fact, on an average nearly a nine-hours day, and in not a few cases appreciably more than a ten-hours day. The miners' claim is to substitute in the statute six for eight, a reduction of 25 per cent. nominal, with such an advance in rates as will prevent a fall in earnings. Their actual day below the surface would then be, in the extreme cases, one of more than eight hours, and on an average one of nearly seven hours. The surface workers would have an equivalent reduction in their working day.

THE GENERAL SHORTENING OF THE WORKING DAY.

We are in the midst of a very general reduction of the hours of labour in nearly every industry. A reduction of hours to 47 per week has just come into force throughout the engineering and ship-building trades, whilst in some other industries a 40-hours week has been secured. It is significant that in the great industry of iron and steel manufacture, with which coal mining is so closely associated—often combined in the same industrial enterprise—a reduction of no less than 33 per cent., or proportionately much more than the miners are asking for, has just been conceded by the employers. In view of the specially arduous and hazardous nature of the work of the miner, we consider that the case for what is virtually a seven-hour day (called, for underground workers, a six-hour day)—which differs only by a few minutes (Q. 7598) from the coal-getting time already prevailing, with the full approval of the coalowners, among a considerable proportion of the hewers in Durham—cannot nowadays be resisted.

We suggest, indeed, that the reduction of the hours during which each individual miner is exposed to his exceptional risk of accident is not only justified, but also a positive advantage to the nation. There are at present between 160,000 and 176,000 casualties in the mines each year—more in number than all those suffered by the whole Gallipoli Expeditionary Force—between 1,500 and 1,700 of them fatal, making the miner's calling more hazardous than any other except that of the seaman. In the ten years from 1907 to 1916 actually 12,400 miners were killed by accidents occurring in the course of their work. We cannot confidently predict that a lessening of hours will, in itself, result in a diminution of accidents, because there has unfortunately been no study of the extent to which the accidents in mines are affected by the men's fatigue. In other industries that have been investigated, it has been proved that a reduction of working time leads to a more than proportionate lessening of accidents. But, however this may be in mining, each individual miner will certainly be a shorter time at risk. The miner, as it has been graphically put to us, is during the whole of his working time continuously "in the trenches." At present he goes on an average only six years before he meets with an accident, not necessarily fatal, but conspicuous enough to be reported, and severe enough to necessitate abstention from work for more than seven days. With a working day from bank to bank reduced by 28 per cent., it may be anticipated that the underground worker will go without an accident, on an average, more nearly eight years than six. It must be counted, indeed, a distinct social advantage of a shorter working day in trades exposed to exceptional risk of accident that it permits, on an average, to every worker (and, therefore, to every father of a family) a longer uncrippled life.

THE EFFECT OF A SHORTER WORKING DAY UPON INDIVIDUAL OUTPUT.

The question necessarily arises as to what reduction in the output of coal will be caused by the proposed shortening of the hours of labour. We have had put before us various estimates of the diminution in production per man employed, varying from 10 to 30 per cent. We cannot say that we place much faith in these estimates, which are nearly always worked out by simple arithmetic, and assume that methods and machinery will remain unchanged.

Sir Richard Redmayne, the Chief Inspector of Mines, in his valuable evidence, refused to accept the view that a reduction of output is necessarily in arithmetical proportion to a reduction in working time, and has told us that whereas he estimates the reduction of the effective working time at the face, through the proposed alteration of hours, as 24·3 per cent., the immediate reduction in output would not, in his opinion, be more than 19 per cent. It should be observed that Sir Richard Redmayne refers here to the *immediate* result of a reduction, without taking account of any one of numerous factors that he mentioned to us, each of which (even irrespective of the economies of unification discussed later) would certainly produce an increased output, and many of which could be brought into play within a very short period. Amongst these factors are the following:—

- (1) The making good of the loss of technical efficiency resulting from the abstraction of the most efficient miners for war service, and from the temporary worsening of the equipment of the mine through lack of supplies of timber, rails, sleepers, &c., caused by the war.
- (2) The possibility of reducing discontinuity of working by better "clearance" from the pithead, by the pooling of privately owned wagons, and by improved methods of stocking coal and filling from stock.
- (3) The reduction of voluntary absenteeism, as to which there is evidence that the shorter working day would cause considerable improvement.
- (4) The conveyance of underground workers to and from the face by mechanical haulage.
- (5) The utilization to a greater extent than at present of the upcast shaft for winding coal and for raising and lowering miners.
- (6) The greater use of two-deck cages.
- (7) The improvement of winding plant and engines.
- (8) The extension of the multiple shift system.

- (9) The greater use of mechanical coal-cutters, pneumatic drills, etc., as to which it may be remarked that at present only 10 per cent. of our coal output is got by machinery.
- (10) The fact that the shortening of working hours would increase (a) the health, and (b) the safety of the miner.

Here are ten factors of improvement which would operate to increase individual output, even should it be temporarily reduced by the shorter working day. As has been pointed out by many of the miners' leaders, however, there is reason to expect that the granting of the miners' programme would introduce a new spirit into the work; and there is ground for the belief that what Sir Richard Redmayne has called a man's "optimum" would be reached by the underground worker, in the long run, as well in a seven-hours day as in a nine-hours day.

However that may be, we think that, in view of the practical circumstances of the case, we should be wrong to base any estimate of reduction of output either upon arithmetical proportion to working time, or upon Sir Richard Redmayne's 19 per cent. "immediate" reduction. Our report, as we conceive it, is to have regard not to output in 1919 alone. Our view is that, taking all things into account, output will show at first a certain fall per hewer and will then, with the introduction of improved methods, presently recover to an extent to which it is impracticable to assign a definite figure.

THE RESULT OF OTHER REDUCTIONS IN THE HOURS OF LABOUR.

We notice that several of those who gave evidence before us, as to the considerable fall in output to be expected, gave very similar evidence also in 1908 on the reduction of hours from about 10 or 11 to 8 or 9; but that these prognostications were not fulfilled. The subsequent advances in output between 1908 and 1913 agreeably surprised the prophets of evil. But we have an even more significant case in Durham, where the hewers have for many years enjoyed a seven-hour day from bank to bank. Nevertheless, the output per underground worker in Durham is fully equal to that of the other districts where more than an extra hour is worked.

Mr. Samuel Hare, representing the Durham Coalowners' Association, who gave evidence before us, very frankly confessed that the Durham mining industry had successfully adjusted itself to the economic conditions of a shorter working day. Asked (Q. 7584) whether the experience of Durham did not show that the fears as to the results of a reduction of hours were groundless, he replied: "I would not go so far as that. I would say that the experience of Durham was that it paid us to work our hewers a shorter shift than in other districts in order to get the advantage of the multiple shift." Asked (Q. 7550) whether he thought it would pay them to go back to a longer day, he answered: "No, I do not."

In the United States the reduction of the hours of labour in coal mining from ten to eight presently led, as is officially reported, to a positively larger output for each workman per day than the highest output of the ten hours. The Industrial Commission of the Supreme Court (Final Report, Vol. II., 1902) reports that "in the industry of coal mining the shorter working day has increased the efficiency of both workmen and the management." We see no reason why a like increase in the efficiency of *both workmen and the management* should not be manifested in this country on the now projected reduction of hours from nine to seven per day.

THE RESULT ON THE AGGREGATE OUTPUT.

Moreover, even to the extent that the average output per workman falls off, we do not anticipate, on the resumption of business by the industrial world, that there will be, in fact, any reduction in the aggregate coal output of this country. We look forward to an increase in the total number of persons who will find employment in the mines—itsself in these days a distinct advantage, not only to the nation, but (in view of the payment of over a million per week in Unemployment Benefit) also to the Exchequer. We do not doubt that, with a quickening of the rate at which mechanical haulage, coal-getting machinery and better organisation of the working are being introduced, and with the working staff increased, the total output of coal, far from suffering any reduction, will be, to the special advantage of our export trade, in the coming years, steadily augmented.

THE ADVANTAGE TO THE NATION OF A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIFE AMONG THE MINERS.

We do not think that the nation is aware of what it has lost, and is still losing, owing to the unduly low standard of life of the miners. Whilst this has resulted in abundant profits to the principal colliery companies, and in the distribution of coal, to many other persons, the cost of labour has not been such as to bring about an efficient organisation of the industry. It has permitted a large number of the nation's collieries to go on, year after year, with machinery and equipment falling far short of the best that is available, and even of the best that is elsewhere in use. There are, it is officially reported, many mines on which the community is relying for its coal in which the shafts are too small, the roads are too narrow, the workings are too badly arranged, the winding engines are too slow, the machinery and plant are too antiquated, and the organisation of the shifts is too uneconomical for the production of coal otherwise than at a cost per ton which, compared with that of an up-to-date enterprise, is extravagant. The fact that the best equipped mines are much more efficient is not, in our view, an excuse

for this continued waste, but an aggravation of the offence. The very division of the 3,300 mines among 1,500 separate commercial enterprises (owned, be it observed, if we confine ourselves to coalmining, by less than 37,000 shareholders, and, if companies engaged in coalmining and allied industries be included, by less than 94,000 shareholders) (a) necessitates, as the Coal Conservation Committee has reported (to mention only a few of its bad results), the waste of masses of coal in boundary ribs; (b) in some districts, prevents the combined drainage, without which a vast amount of coal is lost to the nation; and (c) everywhere stands in the way of that absolute continuity of working throughout the year on which the most economical production depends. When the coal leaves the pithead, the lack of any deliberate organisation for distribution results, as has been proved during the war, in an unnecessary amount of railway haulage to the extent (even on an incomplete analysis) of no less than 700,000,000 coal ton miles, just as the separate ownership of the 700,000 coal trucks results in a waste of truckage, the cost of which runs into millions of pounds per annum. Finally, the failure to organise the sales has permitted the upgrowth, between pit-head and cellar, of tier after tier of factors, merchants, agents, dealers and trollymen, who have all to be maintained out of the price of the coal, at a cost (as has been proved to us) of several shillings per ton more than is now involved in the retail distribution of household coal through the Co-operative Movement; or (as we are convinced) greater than that of a distribution which might be undertaken by the local authorities in connection with their services of gas, electricity, water and tramways. It appears from the evidence put before us that the mere establishment charges of the firms engaged in distributing coal in London alone amount in the aggregate to over £800,000, and their total net profits to over £500,000 per annum.

There are, of course, various causes explaining, but not in our opinion excusing, the continuance to-day of so costly, extravagant and wasteful a method of supplying the nation with coal. But, in our judgment, one leading factor in the acquiescence, year after year, in so defective a system by those who are responsible for its continuance, is that they have been able to get the labour of miners at so low a rate as to permit, notwithstanding the inefficiency of the organisation of the industry, the sharing among those concerned of very considerable profits. We have, in fact, as a nation, got the mine workers' labour too cheap for our economic health. We have, as has been aptly said, wasted coal like water. It is high time, in our view, that such a temptation to social inefficiency should be brought to an end. It is only by putting miners' hours and wages at such a level that they cannot be paid without a really efficient organisation of the industry that we are likely to achieve either those manifold economies in the use of coal that are urged upon us by the experts, or such a reform in our methods of production as will effectually prevent this country falling behind in the competition with nations more quick to adopt the industrial improvements upon which any genuine lowering of cost depends.

WHAT THE INDUSTRY WILL BEAR.

It will, however, be said that, desirable as may be an improvement in the miners' condition, the industry will not bear the cost of a reduction in hours, even if the aggregate output is, by an increase in numbers and therefore in the wages bill, restored to its pre-war level, without involving a considerable advance in the price of coal, with possible adverse effects on our export trade, on manufacturing industry generally, and on the domestic consumer. We have to observe that if the improvement in the miners' standard of life is really required for the greater efficiency of the industry itself, or in the national interest, the fact that it might involve a temporary rise in the price of coal would not be conclusive against it. Moreover, if hours of labour have been reduced in other industries, and if the standard of life has been advanced among other sections of the community, it would hardly be equitable to withhold a corresponding improvement from the miners, merely because the others have got in first. The miners might argue that the large published profits of iron and steel companies and steamship companies indicate that, whilst the domestic consumer had been penalised, these industries had been getting their coal too cheap.

HOW THE COST OF THE SHORTER DAY MIGHT BE MET.

When it is said, which we do not admit, that the proposed reduction of hours would, in itself, necessarily raise the price of coal, *this is to assume that the existing conditions of the industry are to continue*. But there is no economic or other justification for such an assumption. We have already suggested that there is no reason why the profits of the colliery companies should stand after paying royalties, at an average of three to four shillings per ton (as compared with 1s. in the exceptionally prosperous year 1914), or between 30 and 40 per cent. on the standard capital of 10s. per ton—an extraordinary profit by which the Exchequer benefits to the extent of 80 per cent. of the excess, whilst the Coal Controller redistributed 15 per cent. among the less successful concerns. There is no reason why the miners should suffer because (owing merely to the separation of the industry into 1,500 financially distinct enterprises) the rate of wages has to be kept down, and the price of coal has to be kept up, to what will enable the worst mine in use—the worst situated, the worst equipped, the worst managed—to continue to work without loss. The Chairman of one of the most prosperous of the Scottish colliery companies, speaking to his shareholders this very month, observed that “they had been asked why, seeing the company was so prosperous, they did not do more for their employees. His answer was that they were members of the Coalowners' Association, and had to act loyally with

the other companies. Some of the other concerns could not possibly pay better wages." But this results in allowing a special profit, running up, as has been proved to us by the official figures, in some cases to no less than 12s. per ton, to enrich (except in so far as it is reclaimed in taxation) the proprietors of the better mines. There is no reason why the miners should bear the expense of the 700,000,000 coal ton miles of costly railway haulage that the Coal Controller has found to be wasted through the anarchy of our coal production by 1,500 separate colliery companies; or the cost of keeping each of the 700,000 colliery trucks strictly confined to the service of its particular owner, instead of pooling the whole—involving as the Minister of Ways and Communications informed the House of Commons, a loss of 20 per cent. on the total cost of railway carriage of coal. There is no reason why the miner should be blamed by the consumer for the high price of coal, in so far as this is due to the wholesale and retail distribution (which the Co-operative Movement already conducts at from 2 to 5 shillings per ton less than is now taken by the coal trade, and which the Local Authorities could undertake at bare cost) being abandoned to a fourfold series of middlemen, to each of whom profits, and opportunities for further profits, are allowed, over and above the necessary cost of the service. For all that may be wasted in these ways—to quote Sir Eric Geddes—"the community pays, the consumer pays and the workers pay, because they do not get paid enough." We cannot pretend that complete information is yet at our disposal; but, taking all the circumstances into consideration, we see no reason to conclude that, if the production and distribution of the nation's coal were undertaken as a unified service, without opportunity for any profits beyond the necessary interest on capital and wages of management, the whole improvement in the miners' conditions of life now asked for could not be carried out without increasing the price of coal, whether for export, for industrial use, or for domestic consumption. For household coal, indeed, as the experience of the Co-operative Movement indicates, there might even be a substantial "dividend to the customer" off the present high price, which, we may observe, has been brought about by other causes than any proportionate increase in the miners' wages.

We may observe in this connection—and notably in reference to any temporary financing of the transition period,—that we have ascertained from the official statisticians of the Inland Revenue and the Coal Controller that during the four years 1915–1918 the coal mining industry (including the associated coke-ovens) produced, in the aggregate, to the colliery proprietors and the Exchequer, after paying royalties, *and ten per cent. interest on all the capital employed*, nearly eighty millions sterling; and that the excess profits for 1919 alone are similarly estimated, *after paying ten per cent. on all capital*, at not less than 28 millions sterling.

THE NEED FOR NATIONALISATION.

The miners' claims for better conditions, and especially the reduction in the hours of labour—which we think cannot fairly be denied—are therefore bound up, *if we are to escape a rise in the price of coal*, with such an improvement in coal production as cannot be obtained without a complete unification of the ownership and management of the collieries, and with such a reorganisation of the local distribution of household coal as will place the coal supply on the most economical basis. We had the emphatic testimony of Sir Richard Redmayne, the Government's principal coal official, whose knowledge and experience are unrivalled, to the effect that a very large reduction in cost was practicable, and "that the present system of individual ownership of collieries is extravagant and wasteful, whether viewed from the point of view of the coal mining industry as a whole or from the national point of view, is, I think, generally accepted." The waste and extravagance pointed out by Sir Richard Redmayne have already been indicated by the Coal Conservation Committee. But any such unification as is forecasted must, in our judgment, necessarily involve public ownership. We cannot imagine that public opinion would permit the establishment in private capitalist ownership of any National Trust in coal, however specious might be the promises of moderation in profiteering, and however elaborate the system of checks and safeguards for the consumer placed in the hands of the Board of Trade. Nor does the scheme entitled "Joint Control," said to be projected by the Minerowners' Association but not produced for our examination—which seems essentially one of profit-sharing between the combined colliery owners and the miners, and which the Miners' Federation emphatically rejects—avoid a similar criticism. Little more, in the way of protection for the public, is to be expected from the Coal Controller. His work during war-time has, we are convinced, saved the consumer from a staggering rise in the price of household coal, and has affected various temporary economies. But any system of bureaucratic control of capitalist enterprise—which is sometimes mistaken for the very different proposition of public ownership and direct administration—is apt to be irksome and irritating, alike to those whose profits are controlled and to the consumer; and, however preferable to the absence of any regulation whatever, to combine, in fact, the drawbacks of both systems with the full advantage of neither. Moreover, unlike public ownership, control offers no prospect of any improvement in the conditions of safety in the mine, or the prevention of the special diseases to which the miners are subject. It affords, too, no means of bringing to the aid of wages and prices all the profits of the exceptionally productive enterprises. Further, there seems no way in which the very pressing scandal of the shocking housing of the miners—in many districts a special problem which, like extraordinary traffic on the roads, cannot fairly be made a charge on the local authority—can be effectually remedied, except in connection with such a scheme of unification of all the mining properties as would enable the Government to establish a special Miners' Housing Fund as a charge on the industry. Accordingly, once it is admitted that the present

system of individual ownership of the collieries cannot be continued, there is, in our judgment, no practical alternative to some form of National Ownership, alike of mines and royalties.

Sir Richard Redmayne put before us "the advantages which," in his view, "would result from Collective Production" (as he termed it) under the heads of—

- (a) Enhanced Production.
- (b) Diminished Cost of Production.
- (c) Prevention of Waste.

He gave it as his opinion that these advantages would accrue from the following improvements:—

- (1) Prevention of competition, leading to better selling prices for exported coal being secured.
- (2) Control of freights.
- (3) Economy of administration.
- (4) Provision of capital allowing of quicker and more extensive development of backward mines.
- (5) More advantageous purchase of materials.
- (6) Reduction of colliery consumption.
- (7) More harmonious relations between the workmen and the operators due to steadier work and adequate remuneration of workmen.
- (8) Obliteration to a great extent of vested interests and middlemen.
- (9) Unification of the best knowledge and skill leading to greater interchange of ideas and comparison of methods. If good results are obtained at one mine and bad in another, these results would be open to all to benefit therefrom.

We feel that without a decision upon this point of principle it is impossible to weigh the miners' claims on wages and hours. But no more is, for the moment, in question than a decision on the principle. We have not had time, as a Commission, to come to any opinion upon plans and methods of nationalisation. We refrain, therefore, in this Interim Report, from any consideration of the compensation to be paid to the present owners, or of the particular machinery by which the industry may be organised for the State, either nationally or locally, with due provision for ensuring that the industrial and other consumers shall obtain their share in the economies to be effected; and for obtaining the fullest possible co-operation in the administration of all the various classes of employees from whose technical knowledge the nation may rightly expect advantage. Apart from other considerations, a Government which has decided to undertake by direct public administration the generation of electricity in gigantic super-power stations, and which can hardly escape the public administration of a unified railway system, must necessarily secure itself against any "holding up" of the coal supply indispensable to both. This consideration, as it seems to us, cannot but facilitate a decision upon the principle of the public ownership of the coal mines. "In the past," observes the present Minister of Ways and Communications, with regard to the whole system of transportation and the supply of power, "private interest made for development, but to-day, I think, I may say, it makes for colossal waste."

All of which we humbly report for Your Majesty's gracious consideration.

ROBT. SMILLIE.
FRANK HODGES.
HERBERT SMITH.
LEO CHIOZZA MONEY.
R. H. TAWNEY.
SIDNEY WEBB.

20th March, 1919.

4 (c). INTERIM REPORT.

4 (c). INTERIM REPORT BY MESSRS. COOPER, FORGIE AND EVAN WILLIAMS.

DATED 20TH MARCH, 1919.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

The questions which we were appointed by Your Majesty to investigate and report upon are set forth in the Act of Parliament constituting the Commission of which we form part, which received Your Majesty's assent on the 26th February last.

The Act requires that the Commissioners shall as soon as practicable make an Interim Report on the questions of the wages and hours of work of colliery workers, and it is to these questions that this Interim Report is intended to be directed.

WAGES.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain demand that the wages at present paid to colliery workers exclusive of the war wage provided by the Order of the Board of Trade shall be increased by 30 per cent. on the ground that this increase is necessary to enable them to attain a higher standard of life and not merely to meet the increased cost of living at present resulting from the war, which it must be assumed will gradually be reduced as the war conditions disappear.

It was proved in evidence before us that the average annual earnings of all colliery workers both men and boys were, in the year 1913, £82, and in the September quarter of 1918 at the rate of £169, so that the increase of wages since the date of the outbreak of the war was 106 per cent.

According to the "Labour Gazette" of the 16th March, 1919, the increase in the cost of living amongst the working classes is at present 115 per cent., but in the case of colliery workers this percentage is reduced by the fact that they either receive a supply of coals and the use of a house free of charge or a supply of coals at a reduced rate, and except in rare cases no change was made in these respects during the war.

Your Majesty's Government have already offered the miners an increase of 1s. per day, which is equal to 10 per cent. on their earnings.

The question which we have had to decide is not what amount we would desire colliery workers to receive to enable them to attain a higher standard of living, but the amount to which their existing wages ought to be increased, regard being had to a reasonable standard of living amongst the colliery workers and the effect of any increase of their wages on the development of the coal industry and the economic life of the country.

The Commission has had placed before it in evidence by the principal Financial Adviser of the Coal Controller, Mr. Dickinson, statements in much detail. It was in our judgment conclusively proved by him that even if the effect of any reduction of the hours of labour was such as only to reduce the output of coal by 10 per cent. the claims of the miners would add no less than 5s. 4d. per ton to the cost of production (Q. 9382).

Mr. Dickinson's statements show that in the March, June and September quarters of 1918 (the results of the December quarter are not yet ascertained) the following were the average prices, costs and profits of the coal owners obtained from sales to inland consumers and exporters respectively.

In considering these figures it must be remembered that the profits received by the mine-owners are subject to the 80 per cent. Excess Profits Duty and the 15 per cent. Coal Mines Excess Payment, the combined effect of which is that the retainable profits can never exceed 5 per cent. above the profits standard prescribed for each colliery undertaking by the Finance (No. 2) Act,

1915, which is the average of any two out of the three trading years immediately preceding the war, or, in certain cases, of any four out of the six of such years.

The figures referred to are as follows:—

	Quarter ending 31st March, 1918.	Quarter ending 30th June, 1918.	Quarter ending 30th Sept., 1918.
Average receipts per ton of disposable coal ...	19s. 10·49d.	20s. 5·65d.	25s. 1·32d.
Average cost per ton including royalties ...	17s. 11d.	18s. 7·24d.	21s. 1·48d.
*Average profit per ton	1s. 11·49d.	1s. 10·41d.	3s. 10·41d.
Quantity of coal sold inland	31,069,341 tons.	28,073,037 tons	22,822,169 tons
Average price per ton	18s. 7·24d.	18s. 9·1d.	22s. 8·05d.
Profit per ton	8·24d.	1·86d.	1s. 6·57d.
Quantity of coal sold for export	9,217,210 tons.	9,911,600 tons	9,750,214 tons
Average price per ton	24s. 5·8d.	25s. 7·59d.	31s. 1·86d.
Profit per ton	6s. 6·8d.	7s. 0·35d.	10s. 0·38d.

* Note: "The average profit per ton" includes miscellaneous receipts not arising from the sale of coal to the following extent:—

March	3·16d. per ton.
June	3·65d. "
September	3·62d. "

From these figures it will be seen to what a large extent any profit realised by the coal owners has been obtained from the export trade, and it is to be borne in mind that all prices were fixed by the Coal Controller or the Board of Trade.

We are satisfied that the reduction of output of 10 per cent. assumed by Mr. Dickinson would be more than doubled if the reduction asked for by the miners were granted, and it must be apparent that even on the most moderate estimate the granting of the miners' demands must not only absorb all profit realised by the coal owners, but would also leave a heavy deficit unless the price of coals be substantially increased, or the deficit be made good under the terms of the Coal Mines Control Agreement (Confirmation) Act, 1918.

It remains for us to consider whether any increase of price can be made without seriously prejudicing the general trade of the country and particularly the consumers of household coal.

In our judgment no addition can be made to the present export prices. Upon the evidence before us we are of opinion that the existing abnormal prices of coals exported to neutrals cannot be maintained, and that if we are to maintain our trade with foreign markets there must be a substantial reduction in export prices. We can, therefore, only look to our home consumption for any increase of price.

After considering the question we have come to the conclusion that no greater increase than 1s. 6d. per day worked for persons 16 years of age and upwards and 9d. for persons under that age can be made in the existing wages of colliery workers without seriously affecting our home industries, which are dependent upon our coal supply. Such an advance will have the effect of bringing the present average earnings of the colliery workers to over 130 per cent. in excess of their earnings at the outbreak of the war.

HOURS OF LABOUR.

On the evidence placed before us in the short time at our disposal we can come to no other conclusion than that the reduction of hours demanded by the miners would, in the present state of the need of the nation for coal, be seriously prejudicial to the economic life of the country.

The immediate effect of the reduction from eight hours to six hours was estimated by Sir Richard Redmayne, the Chief Inspector of Mines, at over 24 per cent. loss of output, and by the coalowners' witnesses at over 26 per cent.

The former expressed the belief that by increased effort on the part of the individual worker, and by some speeding-up of transport underground, his estimate might be reduced to 19 per cent. This would mean a decrease in output at the rate of about 50,000,000 tons per annum.

The coalowners, on the other hand, were of opinion that there would be little of such mitigation. It was generally agreed that a gradual restoration of output could be attained by an increase in the number of men employed, by the introduction of more machinery at the face, and by the establishment of double shifts for coal-getting, but that the process would be slow.

It was alleged that in the past the workmen had in some districts not assisted in making coal-cutting machinery and conveyors a success, but rather the contrary.

It was admitted (Q. 9492) that so far, at least, as South Wales is concerned, there is no likelihood of the workmen agreeing to work double shift, and it was not denied by any witness called by the Miners' Federation that a reduction of hours would be attended by a decrease in output per man, and by an increase in cost.

A reduction in output of 50 million tons would involve, in our judgment, the entire cessation of export of coal, both to our allies and to neutrals, and besides would create a serious shortage in the home supplies.

Mr. Pick, the Head of the Household Fuel and Lighting Branch of the Coal Mines Department (Q. 1580), stated that he would not like to contemplate any reduction of output, and that the condition to-day is sufficiently serious from the home coal point of view.

We do not, however, lose sight of the fact that the hours of labour are being shortened in many industries at present and that it is only natural that the miners should expect to have some reduction in their hours of work. We therefore recommend that effect should be given to this aspiration as far as can be without inflicting injury upon the community and the industries of the country.

The utmost extent to which we feel that we can safely recommend a reduction in the hours of labour of colliery workers is that in the case of persons employed below ground, "seven" hours should be substituted for "eight" hours in the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1908, and that the hours of all surface workers at or about mines should be fixed at eight hours per day.

For the safety and proper carrying on of the work of the workmen employed below ground it is essential that the hours of labour of the surface men should exceed those of the persons employed below ground.

If these changes were to take place at once there would be a decrease in output of at least 10 per cent.

If time be given preparations may be made to meet the changes so as to mitigate their effect, and with this end in view we recommend their postponement to July 1st next.

As regards the question of nationalisation or unification of ownership of collieries, such evidence as has been placed before us is insufficient to enable us to pronounce any judgment. We therefore refrain in this Interim Report from dealing with this or any of the other questions remitted to us but excluded from this Interim Report by Section 5 of the Coal Industry Commission Act, 1919.

All of which we humbly submit to Your Majesty's most gracious consideration.

R. W. COOPER.

JAMES T. FORGIE.

EVAN WILLIAM.

20th March, 1919.

5. ALPHABETICAL LIST OF WITNESSES EXAMINED.

Name.	Description.	Questions.	Pages.
Allen, S. ...	Coal Manager, Co-operative Wholesale Society, Ltd. ...	9,248-9,277	361-362
Bethell, W. ...	Manager of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, Ltd. ...	10,138-10,157	403-404
Bowen, A. E. ...	Coal Exporter ...	3,747-3,915	154-159
Brain, Sir Francis	Mining Engineer ...	7,387-7,429	292-294
Bramwell, Hugh, O.B.E. ...	Mining Engineer ...	7,149-7,386	283-292
Brewis, Errington	Chairman of London Coal Merchants' Society ...	9,566-9,624	376-378
Burton, T. ...	Coal Manager, Scottish Wholesale Co-operative Society ...	9,148-9,247	358-361
Clark, E., C.B.E....	Deputy Chief Inspector of Taxes, Board of Inland Revenue...	10,158-10,255	404-414
Davies, A. E. ...	General Manager of the Banking Corporation ...	9,860-9,986	389-396
Davies, E. H. ...	Head of Distribution Branch, Coal Mines Department ...	1,885-2,124	79-89
		22-568	2-24
		569-763	25-34
Dickinson, A. L. ...	Financial Adviser, Coal Mines Department ...	6,202-6,204	243-244
		6,969-6,971	276- —
		8,015-8,059	318-319
		9,382-9,411	369-370
		4,791-5,115	189-199
Frowen, W. ...	General Secretary of the Federation of Firemen's, Examiners' and Deputies' Association of Great Britain.		
Gibson, Finlay A.	Secretary of the Monmouthshire and South Wales Coalowners' Association.	6,210-6,398	244-254
Guthrie, R. ...	Secretary to Northumberland and Durham Coalowners' Association }	1-21	1-2
		6,175-6,201	241-242
		6,205-6,209	244- —
Hare, S. ...	Mining Engineer ...	7,430-7,585	294-300
Hartshorn, Vernon, O.B.E. M.P., ...	Miners' Agent of the South Wales Miners' Federation ... }	9,278-9,381	362-368
		9,412-9,534	370-374
Hobson, A. J. ...	Representing Associated Chambers of Commerce and Sheffield Chamber of Commerce.	4,361-4,574	171-180
Hopkins, W. ...	General Secretary of the Monmouthshire and South Wales Colliery Enginemen, Stokers' and Craftsmen's Association.	9,824-9,859	388-389
Jenkins, W. St. D., C.B.E. ...	Deputy Director of Navy Contracts, Admiralty ...	1,761-1,884	75-79
Lee, W. A. ...	Secretary, Coal Mines Department ...	974-1,388	43-56
Louis, Henry ...	Professor of Mining ...	7,586-7,649	300-302
Mottram, T. H., O.B.E. ...	H.M. Divisional Inspector of Mines ...	2,125-2,669	91-109
Nugent, R. T. ...	Director of Federation of British Industries ...	10,003-10,102	398-401
Parker, Harper ...	General Secretary of the National Council of Mine Workers ...	9,688-9,817	382-387
Pawsey, R. F. ...	Secretary, Mineral Owners' Association of Great Britain ...	7,890-8,014	312-316
Pearson, F. J. ...	Assistant Accountant-General for the Post Office ...	4,575-4,617	181-182
Pease, A. F. ...	Chairman of Messrs. Pease & Partners, Ltd. ...	7,661-7,889	303-312
Pick, F. ...	Head of Household Fuel and Lighting Branch, Coal Mines Depart- ment.	1,389-1,760	57-75
Potts, J. ...	Treasurer of Yorkshire Miners' Association ...	9,044-9,147	354-358
Redmayne, Sir	H.M. Chief Inspector of Mines. Head of Production Branch, Coal }	5,116-6,174	201-240
Richard, A. S., K.C.B. ...	Mines Department, and Chairman of Imperial Mineral Resources { Bureau.	6,960-6,968	275-276
Richardson, R. ...	Mining Engineer ...	6,399-6,808	254-267
Robertson, J. ...	Chairman of Scottish Union of Mine Workers ...	8,834-9,043	345-354
Rose, G. ...	Chairman of National Council of Coal Traders ...	9,625-9,685	379-381
Shirkie, R. ...	Secretary of National Federation of Colliery Enginemen and Boiler- men.	9,535-9,565	374-376
Stamp, J. C., C.B.E. ...	Assistant Secretary Board of Inland Revenue ...	764-973	34-43
Stevenson, Sir D. M., Bart. ...	Coal Exporter ...	3,320-3,563	135-143
Straker, W. ...	Secretary of Northumberland Miners' Association ...	8,060-8,833	320-345
Strachan, J. ...	General Secretary of the National Federation of Colliery Under Managers.	10,103-10,137	401-403
Talbot, Benjamin	Representing National Federation of Iron and Steel Manufacturers }	2,830-2,956	118-124
		2,957-3,319	124-135
Tatlow, F. ...	General Manager, Midland Railway Company ...	2,670-2,829	110-118
Tennyson, C. A., C.M.G. ...	Assistant Director of Federation of British Industries ...	9,987-10,002	396-398
		6,809-6,959	267-273
		6,972-7,148	277-283
Thornycroft, Wallace... ...	Mining Engineer ...	7,650-7,660	302-303
		9,686-9,687	381- —
Warham, Ridley	General Manager, Ashington Coal Company ...	3,916-4,360	159-171
Watson, D. Milne	President of National Gas Council of Great Britain and Ireland ...	4,618-4,790	183-189
Watson, Sir T. E., Bart ...	Coal Exporter ...	3,564-3,746	143-152
Williams, J. W. ...	Agent of North Wales Surfacedmen's Union ...	9,818-9,823	387- —