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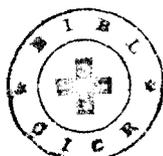
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# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

## *THE ROAD BACK TO WORK*

by *NORAH HILL, A.R.R.C.*

*Principal in the Disabled Persons Branch Ministry  
of Labour and National Service.*

*AN ACCOUNT OF THE RESETTLEMENT OF THE  
DISABLED IN GREAT BRITAIN, UNDER THE ADMI-  
NISTRATION OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND  
NATIONAL SERVICE*

### SIGNPOSTS ALONG THE ROAD

Early in the 1939-45 war it was recognised that the return to civilian life of the disabled members of the Fighting Forces, the Merchant Navy and others injured through enemy action would present a considerable resettlement problem. Secondly, it was apparent that many of those already on the disabled list—not only through war disablement but also because of injury, disease or deformity—could make a substantial contribution in manpower to the war effort. A scheme was therefore set up by the Ministry of Labour and National Service in 1941 called the “Interim Scheme for the Training and Resettlement of the Disabled” which had the dual purpose of helping those who had suffered recent disablement to resume their former employment or to find the kind of work best suited to them, and helping those whose disability was of older date to prove their capacity to play their part in the war effort. This Interim Scheme merged gradually into the later Schemes so it will not be necessary to describe it in detail, but the experience gained in working it was valuable.

The next signpost along the road was the decision to prepare during the war a permanent scheme to assist the Resettlement

of the disabled at the end of the war. This was started by the appointment of the "Interdepartmental Committee on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Disabled Persons" over which Mr. George Tomlinson presided, and the publication early in 1943 of its report<sup>1</sup> commonly referred to as the "Tomlinson Report". In this report the principles were set down on which future legislation was to be based.

### PRINCIPLES OF RESETTLEMENT

From the first it has been a basic principle of the British scheme of resettlement that it should cover disablements of all kinds and from all causes. The test is the effect of disability on the worker's employment capacity and not the cause of the disability. It does not matter whether the disability is acquired from birth or through childhood illness, from an industrial or other accident or from war service. All the disabled, provided they are substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment suited to their age, qualifications and previous experience, should be eligible for help.

Secondly, it was recognised by the Committee that it is in the interest of the country, as well as of the disabled citizen, that he should get back to suitable employment as soon as possible—not to *any* employment but to the most skilled work of which he is capable. There was too common a tendency before the last war to assume that disabled people were capable only of light work of an unskilled character, but recent experience has shown that, with careful selection of work suited to the disability and with training as necessary for that work, most of the disabled are able to hold their own in a variety of occupations, many calling for skill. A disabled man's range of possible activity depends far more on character and personality, i.e. on his remaining abilities, than on his actual disability, which is only one of several factors to be considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 6415. H.M. Stationery Office, Kingsway, London, W.C.2. Price 9d. net.

Thirdly, the Tomlinson Report emphasized that the only really satisfactory form of resettlement for a disabled person is employment which he can take and keep on his merits as a worker in normal competition with his fellows. It is recognised, of course, that there are a small number of severely disabled men and women who need employment under special conditions, but the great majority have proved that they can compete in normal industry. The Report therefore did not aim at providing special work conditions or appliances for the disabled but rather at training the man to work with his fellow employees with the minimum of adaptation and specialisation. The disabled worker claims no special philanthropy from his employer. His aim is to prove his fitness to work side by side with the able-bodied, provided he is suitably equipped for this sometimes exacting task. Admittedly this is a high standard, but it is the only one which is likely to secure full employment for the disabled under competitive conditions.

#### THE DISABLED PERSONS EMPLOYMENT ACT, 1944

The general scheme advocated in the Tomlinson Report was embodied in the above Act which was passed in 1944. It came into full operation in August, 1945. Its object is "to make further and better provision for enabling persons handicapped by disablement to secure employment or work on their own account", and it made provision for the training and employment of disabled persons along the lines which will be described in the succeeding paragraphs, based on the principles laid down in the Tomlinson Report.

#### THE D.R.O. SERVICE

One of the Tomlinson Committee's recommendations was that a specialised service, within the Employment Exchange organisation of the Ministry of Labour and National Service should be set up to deal with the placing of disabled men and

women in employment and the following-up of cases to ensure satisfactory resettlement. It was recognised that placing in employment would not complete the process of medical rehabilitation unless proper care was taken to see that the employment was suited to the disability and full use made of individual capacity. This recommendation has been implemented by the selection at every Local Office (including Regional Appointments Offices) of the Ministry of Labour and National Service of one or more officers who are given specialised training and whose duty it is to help disabled men and women to get suitable employment. Each of these officers—there are men for men and women for women—is known as the Disablement Resettlement Officer (D.R.O.). He (or she) is in touch with all hospitals and sanatoria in his area, and is prepared to visit patients requiring advice on resettlement. He is also ready to give a private interview to any disabled person who calls at the Local Office and asks for assistance in obtaining employment or vocational training.

In giving vocational guidance the D.R.O. is guided by medical advice regarding the nature and extent of the disability and its effect on the employment capacity of the disabled person and, where necessary, such medical guidance is obtained from a specialist.

### INDUSTRIAL REHABILITATION

The work undertaken at Egham, Surrey, has demonstrated that it is impossible to draw any precise line of demarcation between medical and industrial rehabilitation. There is a stage in the process of converting a hospital patient into an active worker at which what he needs is mainly recuperative medical treatment coupled with occupational therapy so as to enable him to regain the normal use of his bodily and mental capacities. This is primarily a medical matter and is a vital part of the comprehensive Health Service now being developed. Experience has, however, shown that, after receiving all the hospital rehabilitation available, there may follow a stage in which, while the disabled person may still need a certain amount of medical treatment, the main thing is to make him thoroughly fit and

prepared to enter the employment field, and to do what is necessary to enable him either to return to his former employment or to come to a sound conclusion as to what his future occupation should be. This stage is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, and is being dealt with through Industrial Rehabilitation Centres.

The object of industrial rehabilitation courses is to restore the working capacity of men and women who, although they no longer need hospital treatment, are not immediately fit to take up work. The act enables the Minister of Labour and National Service himself to provide such courses or to arrange for their provision by others, if necessary contributing towards their cost. After consultation with the Health Departments the Ministry of Labour and National Service established a residential Industrial Rehabilitation Centre for men at Egham. This Centre has a capacity of 200 and aims to get the disabled person fit for work or for vocational training. The stay at the Centre varies from six weeks to three months according to the needs of each man. All the facilities are provided free and the residents receive free board and lodging, and maintenance allowances for themselves and their dependants. Between August, 1948 and the end of the year the Ministry will open thirteen additional industrial rehabilitation centres, most of them non-residential, some of which will provide facilities for women and for the neurosis group, neither of which groups has hitherto been catered for at Egham. These new units will be situated in industrial areas and will actually be located inside a Government Training Centre. This development is a completely new experiment which will be carefully watched.

Another type of industrial rehabilitation is being provided by employers in their own establishments, on actual productive work. This has the advantage of linking the process closely with future employment, and is specially valuable for those who, after injury, hope to return to the same type of employment—though not necessarily the same job—as they were doing previously. A variety of schemes are now running, but perhaps the best known is that of a big motor engineering firm, who have organised their scheme in close collaboration with a nearby

Accident Hospital. A special rehabilitation workshop has been set apart by the firm for sick or injured employees needing light employment. Working conditions are good and all employment in this workshop is carefully supervised by the firm's medical staff in consultation with the surgeon-in-chief at the hospital. The wage system is such that the workers earn more than they would if on compensation only, but less than their pre-accident earnings. They thus have a double incentive (*a*) to earn more than they would if they remained on compensation only; (*b*) to return to their pre-accident rate as soon as possible. The average stay in the shop is 4 to 6 weeks, and the employers claim to have sent many men back to their previous jobs who might otherwise have had to find different work. The aim is complete recovery of function rather than speed in return to normal employment.

#### CIVIL RESETTLEMENT UNITS

It may be the appropriate place here to mention the 20 Civil Resettlement Units which were set up by the War Office to deal with the resettlement of repatriated British prisoners of war. These Units were started soon after the war ended and the last closed down in June, 1947. The Ministry of Labour, although it had no responsibility for running the Units, co-operated closely in finding employment for the ex-prisoner of war as soon as he was ready to leave the Unit.

Altogether 24,000 ex-servicemen, of whom 7,000 had been prisoners in the Far East, voluntarily passed through these Units where they stayed for a period varying from 4 to 13 weeks. A specially qualified staff helped them to overcome all their difficulties of adaptation to civilian life—medical, domestic, or vocational—and put them on the right road back to work.

For those ex-prisoners who were unable to attend Civil Resettlement Units, an Extension Scheme was organised by the War Office with the co-operation of some 4,000 members of the Red Cross and St. John, Women's Voluntary Services and other

voluntary organisations. In ten months visits were made to about 80,000 ex-prisoners of war, and a large number of them received assistance without actually attending a Unit.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THE DISABLED

It is a mistake to think that every disabled man or woman needs a course of vocational training before entering employment. Experience has proved that the great majority can go straight into employment and less than one in 10 needs to take a vocational training course, either because he cannot return to his previous trade or because he has learnt no trade and wants to take up an occupation suited to his disability.

Under the Disabled Persons Employment Act, the Ministry of Labour and National Service is authorised to provide vocational training free of charge for all disabled persons aged 16 or over who are in need of it to make them fit to work. The training is carried out in various ways, either in Government Training Centres where the disabled and the able-bodied work alongside ; in special Residential Centres run by voluntary organisations, which are particularly suitable for the more severely disabled ; in Technical Colleges, which are well adapted for the younger workers ; or in employers' own works, under the special arrangements made between the employers and the Ministry.

Training is given in a wide range of occupations and trades, which varies in different parts of the country according to local industries. The period of training varies with the occupation but in most trades is about 26 weeks. Lodgings are found when the trainee is forced to leave his home area, and allowances are paid both to trainees and their dependants. Over 28,000 disabled men and women have passed through training courses since 1941.

Apart from this kind of training, which is mostly for manual occupations, the Ministry also arranges under the " Further Education and Training Scheme " for training in occupations of a professional, technical or executive character, but the actual

training takes place in educational establishments. There is also another scheme for business training, for which certain disabled persons are eligible.

## BACK TO WORK

Industrial rehabilitation and vocational training courses are steps forward along the road leading back to work. The ultimate object is to find for the disabled man work which is suited to his capacity and which he can do in normal competition with his fellows, except in a small proportion of cases for which special employment of a sheltered kind must be provided.

How does the Disabled Persons Employment Act help to find him that work ?

He must first of all apply to have his name entered on the 'Register of Disabled Persons' which, under the authority of the Act, has been set up in every Employment Exchange. Registration started on 1st September, 1945, and is a continuing process. Already nearly 900,000 disabled persons have been registered (August 1948) and still the Register grows. This act of registration is merely a means of identifying those who are "substantially handicapped" in relation to their work and who therefore require some additional security.

Registered disabled persons can be helped to find employment in several ways. They can and do compete for jobs in the ordinary market with the non-disabled, and a great many fill vacancies which are notified to the Employment Exchange in the ordinary way by employers. The Tomlinson Committee foresaw, however, that not every employer would willingly engage his share of the disabled, and they therefore recommended the introduction of an obligation on as many employers as practicable to employ a quota or percentage of registered disabled persons. The Act applies the quota to all employers of 20 or more workers. The percentage is fixed by Order of the Minister of Labour and National Service after consultation with representatives of employers and workers and can be varied from time to time. When the Scheme was introduced on

1st March, 1946, the standard percentage was fixed at 2% but it was raised on 1st September, 1946, to 3% and still stands at this figure (August, 1948). An employer who is below his quota may not engage a person who is not a registered disabled person without a permit from the Ministry of Labour. Only those disabled who are regarded as suitable for the job are submitted, and, if there is no-one suitable on the Register, the employer may get a permit to employ a worker other than a registered disabled person. There is also a provision that an employer must not discharge a registered disabled person without reasonable cause if that discharge would leave him below his quota.

A second way in which the Act gives the disabled a special chance of employment is through the Designated Employments Scheme, by which the Minister, also after consultation with both sides of industry, designates certain employments as being specially suitable for disabled persons. The effect of designation is to reserve future openings in the designated employment to registered disabled persons only, and employers may not engage an unregistered person if there is a registered disabled person suitable for the job. From 1st September, 1946, the Minister designated two employments—those of passenger electric lift attendant and car park attendant—and made an Order accordingly. No further occupations have yet been designated.

Under all the training and employment Schemes mentioned above, preference is given (when there is a waiting list) to men and women who have served in H.M. Forces or in the Merchant Navy or in specified Women's Services. This preference, which is statutory, is not limited to those whose disablement is directly due to service.

#### SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT

Lastly, there are those who are so seriously disabled that they are unable to enter normal competitive employment and therefore require employment under special (sheltered) conditions. The Act enables the Minister of Labour and National

Service to provide this kind of employment by any of the following methods :

(a) setting up a Company or Companies specially for the purpose ;

(b) granting financial assistance to non-profit making organisations providing such employment ;

(c) granting financial assistance to Local Authorities who, under their Statutory Powers, provide such employment.

The Minister has already established the Disabled Persons Employment Corporation, Limited, to create and develop employment facilities for the severely disabled in all those areas where the need exists. The present programme of the Corporation includes more than 100 workshops and 25 have already been opened employing more than 1,000 workers. The workshops are known as Remploy factories and a wide range of useful products will be made so as to provide employment suited to the ability of workers ; the working conditions are to be such as to meet the needs of the majority of workers and rates of pay will be based on the rate for the job with adjustments in individual cases but subject to a minimum rate.

Assistance under a special scheme is being given to a number of non-profit making organisations employing the severely disabled. The purpose of the scheme is to encourage voluntary bodies to continue their good work and to extend where possible.

The assistance to Local Authorities relates mainly to the blind.

Employment under sheltered conditions is provided for Blind persons in 63 workshops for the blind. These workshops are managed either by Local Authorities or Voluntary Organisations acting on behalf of Local Authorities. The Ministry of Labour and National Service is responsible for the cost of training Blind Persons in these workshops. Maintenance

allowances similar to those payable to other severely disabled persons receiving training in sheltered workshops are paid to the trainees by the Ministry.

From 5th July, 1948, the Ministry of Labour and National Service will assist Local Authorities to meet the cost of providing special employment facilities for Blind Persons by the payment of substantial capitation grants.

It is not possible for all the severely disabled to be employed in workshops, and schemes for employment in the home are, therefore, being developed. The Disabled Persons Employment Corporation has already established homeworking schemes based on four of its Remploy factories and other schemes will be developed as soon as practicable. Encouragement is given to voluntary undertakings in this respect and homeworking schemes for the blind already developed by Local Authorities and Institutions for the Blind, will be continued and further developed.

#### GOING INTO BUSINESS

Those disabled men and women who were in business on their own account which they had to give up on account of service in the Forces, Merchant Navy or Civil Defence, and who are in need of assistance to restart their businesses, as well as those setting up for the first time who are pensionably disabled as a result of 1939-45 war service, can apply for help under the Ministry's Resettlement Grants Scheme. This Scheme, administered by the Ministry of Labour and National Service, makes grants up to £150, when resettlement in business is considered to be the best form of resettlement.

There is also a Business Training Scheme, already referred to, under which those who, as a result of disability received through war service, cannot return to their pre-war career or training, and who wish to apply for training in business administration, can be assisted.

## ACHIEVING FINAL AND PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT

It may be supposed that, in spite of all these schemes and facilities which are being provided, there are still some disabled men and women who fail to find employment, or who turn back after they have started out along the road back to work. There are, for instance, those suffering from nervous disabilities who are restless by the very nature of their disability. How can the Disablement Resettlement Officer ensure that everything possible has been done to resettle a man in the right job? First of all, how can he decide what *is* the right job?

The Tomlinson Committee originally suggested that the Ministry of Labour and National Service should collect information on the suitability of particular occupations to particular disablements. This proposal was examined by a small committee which included three doctors. They took the view that it would be quite impracticable to prepare a comprehensive list of all the disabilities and to attempt to match suitable occupations against it. They recommended, as an alternative, the preparation of a descriptive guide to occupations, indicating their physical requirements and associated environmental conditions, and to accompany this with a form of medical report, showing the physical and functional limitations which must be taken into account in assessing the disabled worker's employability. Such a guide has been prepared and is being used, as recommended, in conjunction with the new type of medical report form.

D.R.O. thus have, on the one hand, a medical report, supplemented by verbal medical advice where possible, as to the person's capabilities, and on the other industrial guidance to supplement their own experience of job requirements. Thus armed, they are in a position to guide the disabled applicant for employment along the right road, although there are those who prefer to strike out on their own, against the advice proffered.

Having done his best to give guidance in the first place, the next task of the D.R.O. is to see whether the selected employment has provided satisfactory resettlement. To do

this, he "follows up" his client after a period by an enquiry as to how he is getting on, and whether he needs any further assistance. If he finds that he is out of work, he tries to place him again; if the work is unsatisfactory he tries to probe the reason and, if possible, to remove the cause. In the majority of cases, however, he will receive re-assurance that those he has started out along the road to work after disablement are now happily settled in and have been re-absorbed into the productive man-power capacity of the nation. So ends the long journey back to health and work.

#### WHAT OF THE FUTURE ?

Clearly, no scheme is ever complete—there are always improvements and extensions which at present lie buried in the minds of those responsible.

In the first place better integration of medical and industrial rehabilitation is planned, with closer actual co-operation between doctors and Disablement Resettlement Officers, sitting round a table planning together for the worker's resettlement in industry. Next, as knowledge of the needs of particular groups of disabled workers increases—so can these be better met. The blind, the epileptic, heart cases, the tuberculous—they all have their special problems, and it is only by patient research and experiment—sometimes even by trial and error—that the right type of employment is discovered and success is achieved.

Again, there is much more to be done for those needing special conditions of employment or work in their own homes. The housing shortage, and the difficult man-power situation have slowed up provision of sheltered accommodation, but plans have been made for further advances.

As post-war conditions improve, progress will be smoother, but it cannot be emphasised too often that resettlement of the disabled does not require a vast quantity of special machinery. As the Tomlinson Committee emphasised: "Ordinary employment is the object and is practicable for the majority of the

disabled—with the goodwill and co-operation of the representative organisations of employers and workpeople, in conjunction with the Health Services and the responsible Government Departments.” If the disabled worker and his employer can both be helped to forget the disability and to concentrate on the remaining abilities, then resettlement will be achieved in the great majority of cases.

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