

Older workers (1956)

Second Report
on 'Alternative Work' in Later Life

The Employment Problems of Elderly Men

*An Inquiry based on Ministry of Labour and
National Service Records into the Transfer with
Age to Lighter or Alternative Jobs*

BY

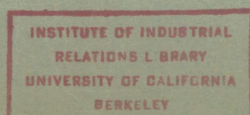
F. Le Gros Clark, M.A.

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THE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF ELDERLY MEN :

An Inquiry Based on Ministry of Labour and National Service

Records into the Transfer with Age to Lighter

or Alternative Jobs //

by F. Le Gros/Clark, M.A.

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The Nuffield Foundation, ~~Nuffield Lodge~~, Regent's Park

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F O R E W O R D

Anyone who has studied the interests of elderly workers recognizes that many of them could not have remained gainfully occupied unless they had been given the chance of moving to some relatively light employment. This may, in fact, turn out to be the essence of the employment problem of all ageing men; and it is a subject on which the Country unfortunately possesses very little information. Nobody yet knows, for example, what numbers of older men need at various ages to make such transitions, or how many of them fail to find a satisfying alternative job. A fresh line of approach to the problem has here been adopted; it has enabled the author to explore fairly effectively some of the obscure corners of the whole field.

The Foundation is deeply indebted to the officers of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, both for the data they have provided and for the critical suggestions made to Mr. Le Gros Clark while the work was still in progress. For the ways in which the data have been analysed and interpreted Mr. Le Gros Clark is alone responsible. The value of his report will depend on what appeal it may make to the practical good sense of all sides of industry; doubtless it will be for employers and the trade unions between them to consider how these complicated human problems are to be met and solved.

L. FARRER-BROWN
Director of the Nuffield Foundation

SUMMARY

To gain a more intimate picture of the types of lighter or alternative work undertaken by many older men, records were examined of the 'placings' in employment effected through 141 of the Employment Exchanges of the Ministry of Labour and National Service in the month October - November 1954. The 141 Exchanges are evenly distributed over the 11 Regions of the Ministry; the month was selected as one that is usually characterised by a high, but not an abnormal, demand for labour. 1,173 men aged 60 and over found employment of some kind during the period. A study of the records suggests that 537 of these were moving, or had already moved, to jobs of a lighter nature. The report is mainly concerned with an analysis of the transitions the 537 men were apparently making.

The older men placed in employment by the Exchanges must not be taken as anywhere near a fair cross-section of the whole occupied male population of the country. Only in a few of the occupations they normally follow through life can the older men in our sample be treated as typical of their kind; and these occupations are examined briefly in their place. It is considered, however, that the records of transfer to light or alternative work are fully representative of all movements of this description that are constantly in progress throughout industry.

The significance in the age problem of the Ministry's register of 'disabled persons' is carefully examined. The latest available figures show that of the total number of registered disabled persons 15 per cent are veterans of the 1914-18 war; and the implications of this are discussed. No need is felt for our purpose, however, to make a hard-and-fast distinction between the 'disabled' and the 'able-bodied' older men.

Most of the 537 transferred men were finding their way either to light labouring jobs in factories or to one or other of the occupations usually reckoned suitable for older men, e.g. those of watchmen, cleaners, shop porters, messengers, handy-men, gate-keepers, gardeners. The residue were placed in alternative forms of work that were probably lighter than their customary jobs but may have required some preliminary training. As far as is practicable, the industrial origins of these 537 men are traced. In order that the single month October - November 1954 may be seen in due perspective, the year's experience of one fairly representative Exchange is studied in detail. It is concluded among other matters that our month is sufficiently typical of the course of these transactions.

In a commentary on the records we draw attention to the characteristics of the lighter jobs ordinarily undertaken by older men, the casual or seasonal nature of much of the work, the varied opportunities offered to older men by areas of differing social and industrial composition, and the serious need to broaden the countrywide basis of such alternative work as is appropriate for the ageing.

Reasons are incidentally suggested for suspecting that the existing supply of jobs of this kind may soon begin to fall behind the demand. In an estimate of the extent of the possible demand it is provisionally assumed that somewhere around 15 - 20 per cent of all men in their early or mid sixties may need to make transitions of this kind if they are to remain occupied. A further 10 per cent are thought to have become by these ages more or less chronically incapacitated. Statistics are appended showing the comparative proportions of men remaining to a very late age in various occupations, with some reference to those among them who have taken up the conventional 'old man's jobs'.

THE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF ELDERLY MEN

An Inquiry Based on Ministry of Labour and National Service

Records into the Transfer with Age to Lighter

or Alternative Jobs

It is generally agreed that older men have often to move into less arduous or responsible jobs; if such men do not make a move when the time comes, they usually have no alternative but to retire. Though this is generally agreed, the whole subject is still very obscure. How many of the older men, for instance, have to contemplate a move of this kind? What new jobs are nowadays open to them - or are likely to be open to them in the industrial future?

The last of these questions is an important one, because technological changes in industry may affect in various ways the employment of the ageing. They may or may not make it easier for an old man to continue on his customary work; and they may restrict the opportunities he now has of finding suitable light employment. The problem of transferring old men to new jobs is likely to increase with time, because the numbers of old men are increasing and the numbers of available jobs (at all events in the conventional field of employment) are showing no marked increase.

It has become clear from the evidence that an old man's need to transfer depends not only on his health and age, but even more perhaps on the relative load, pace or responsibility of the work on which he has been employed. Obviously we can here make no general statements about the problem. Again, some industries are still able to find light jobs for a number of their older employees, whereas in others men have little chance of being transferred to work of this kind. We have, then, to discover into what new jobs elderly men are commonly moving, and from what industrial origins. If we only knew that, the shape and substance of the whole problem would become more real and tangible. There are no statistical sources of information on this subject, beyond the Census Tables we used in an earlier report.⁽¹⁾ We have therefore to cast a wide net upon the industrial waters and see what we can learn.

There is only one comprehensive source of information on this subject, and that is the Ministry of Labour and National Service. We have grounds for believing that the Ministry's Exchanges may be finding light or alternative work of some kind for more than fifteen thousand old men in the course of a year. But the argument for going to this source of information is that we would expect that the Ministry would here produce an unbiased and representative sample. When ageing men have to move into a new job, they try various courses. Many of them do apply at the Exchanges; and it seems usually a matter of chance and convenience whether a man adopts this or some other way of satisfying his needs. As for the types of light work the Exchanges may have to offer him, a careful examination of them shows that they are typical of all jobs of this nature; they are precisely the kinds of job that industrial managements offer on occasion to their older employees. After all, it is the business of an Exchange to satisfy both prospective employers and prospective employees, and to know what types of light employment are likely to be available over the whole area. Though we can get information on the subject from individual Firms, the picture they give is necessarily partial and inconclusive.

(1)

'New Jobs for Old Workers. An examination of the Statistical Evidence for the Provision of Alternative Occupations'. Muffield Foundation, 1955.

But beyond this very limited field no sample taken from the Exchanges can be of much use to us. That should be made absolutely clear at this stage. The men who turn up at the Exchanges are rarely typical of any branch of industry or any social group. In some instances they may not be completely representative. For example, the proportion among older applicants who are looking for light jobs does not necessarily indicate the full extent of such movements in industry as a whole. It does not do so, because numbers of older men who are still effective workers have no cause to visit an Exchange at all since they are not needing to change their employment. In other words, it is likely that our sample would contain a disproportionately large number of men needing an alternative job. To discover the full extent of the problem we should have to go to other sources of information.

We shall therefore concentrate upon the several hundred old men in our sample who are making a transition. Here we are on sure ground. We shall touch briefly later upon any other reliable information the data seem to yield (see Appendix I. p.22).

It is scarcely necessary to add that in speaking of the transfer of men in their sixties to lighter work we are concerned both with those who are compelled for various reasons to give up their jobs, and with those who wish of their own initiative to make such a transition. There are many who have no temperamental urge to retire from gainful occupation, and it is important that their special interests should be safeguarded.

Method of the Inquiry

The Ministry of Labour arranged that each of its 11 Regions should ask at least 12 Employment Exchanges to provide information on all the placings of men of 60 years and over for the four weeks October 21st to November 17th, 1954. In each case there was to be recorded the man's age, the main occupation for which he had normally been registered, any alternative occupation for which he was known to be available, and the occupation in which he was actually placed at that time. Where the man was a registered 'disabled' person, the fact was to be recorded. A further heading required the listing of men of these ages who were 'nominated' by their prospective employers and so notified to the Exchanges; but in this case no special inquiry was to be undertaken. The subject is discussed immediately below.

In order that the number of older men placed in the period might be related to the total placings of the men of all ages, the number of men aged 18 and over placed in the month was recorded by each of the Exchanges. The Managers of Exchanges were finally asked to comment on any other occupations in which they had found it possible from time to time to place their older applicants.

Completed records were received from 141 Exchanges; and these may probably be taken as a sufficiently representative sample. The number of men aged 60 and over recorded by these Offices as placed in the course of the month was 1,173. This represents 31.8 per cent of the 3,702 men of the same ages placed in the period throughout the country. On the other hand, our 141 Exchanges had among them disposed of 51,950 men of all ages from 18 upwards; that is 37.3 per cent of the 139,178 men placed throughout the country. It seems likely, however, that many of the larger Offices would have been dealing with especially high numbers of young applicants; and a good many of our 141 Exchanges are among the largest in the country.

The inquiry included a certain number of men within the scope of the Notification of Vacancies Order, 1952, who were engaged on the strength of their own negotiations with an employer and not as a result of submission by an Employment Exchange. A record of such engagements is kept at the Exchanges and a scrutiny of these records does not suggest that they differ

in any respect from their fellows. Accordingly we can merge them in the total body of older men placed by the Exchanges. The inquiry will therefore be based upon the records of 1,178 men aged 60 and over.

Ministry of Labour and National Service

Restricted Uses of the Records

We must be quite clear before we go further that records of this kind are only worth analysing for one or two precise purposes. They may be typical enough of the men of an advanced age who turn up at the Exchanges. But they are not in any way typical of the older occupied male population as a whole. They differ from it both in their age structure and in their industrial characteristics. The age structure of our 1,178 men is shown in the following Table, together with the percentage distribution among them of the three age groups.

Table 1

Age Structure of 1,178 Old Men Placed in Work

| Age | Number | Approx. per cent |
|--------|--------|------------------|
| 60-64 | 833 | 70.7 |
| 65-69 | 296 | 25.1 |
| 70+ | 49 | 4.2 |
| Totals | 1,178 | 100 |

If, on the other hand, we take the whole occupied male population of the country, as it was recorded in the 1951 Census, we find that the comparable percentage figures among the last three groups run approximately as follows:- 60-64 57.0, 65-69 26.0, 70 and over 17.0.

The difference is not at all surprising; for by their mid sixties and often much earlier most men would have settled into jobs that they do not leave till they finally retire. Men of this kind simply do not turn up at the Exchanges; and this accounts for the relatively small number in our sample of the men of 70 and over.

Again, only four of the occupational groups represented in our sample are likely to be worth studying for their own sake. These are the men who have spent their working lives as clerks, as drivers of road and rail vehicles, as building craftsmen and as labourers of one kind or another. The reason for this is obvious enough. A good many road drivers have to quit the steering wheel while still in a fair state of health; and such men are as likely to turn up at the Exchanges as to look for an alternative job in any other way. As for labourers and building craftsmen, there are grounds for supposing that the older men among them who apply at the Exchanges are typical of all elderly men in the industry; it is merely a matter of chance whether they are still moving from job to job or have settled down

in a factory or with a maintenance firm. Elderly clerks turn up at the Exchanges in considerable numbers, often seeking routine clerical work to supplement a modest superannuation.

No other industry, e.g. mining, agriculture, textiles, engineering or the docks, is anywhere near represented among the older men at the Exchanges. No study of the records would give us an adequate picture of them. So far as the older men among them still move from one employer to another, they clearly in most cases make their own way.

We shall not, therefore, treat the records of these 1,178 old men as though they were a fair sample of all the elderly workers in the country. There is only one reliable piece of information they have to give us about the later working life; and that is information about the types of light or alternative work to which a large number of them move. This is really the information we want to get. As far as we can judge, 537 out of the 1,178 elderly men are making or have already made a transition of this kind. We know something of the new jobs to which they are moving, and often of their former occupations. Most of our report, therefore, will be concerned with their industrial origins and destinations.

Significance of the 'Disabled' in the Age Problem

There is, however, one further difficulty that has to be met. 238 of the 1,178 men are registered as 'disabled persons'; and the question at once arises whether these ought to be separated from the 'able-bodied' old men. It may as well be said at once that there seems not the slightest reason for making such a distinction. The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 was so designed that the disabled person would be assisted to take his place in industry on equal terms with his able-bodied colleagues. Disablement is here a medical rather than an industrial category. The specific disabilities of disabled people have been clearly defined in simple medical terms by the Ministry of Labour and National Service, and presumably the men would all find certain industrial operations variously beyond their powers. But the jobs they undertake they may be performing quite effectively; and anyway, the main purpose of registration is to give the nation a better chance of fitting the jobs to the men. Among the older men there will no doubt be found cases of arthritis, cardiac debility, etc; but it is suspected that the majority of the registered 'over sixties' are at present injury or disease cases of long duration, whose disabilities may or may not have been complicated by age.

However, a 20 per cent level of disablement in this age group is not a negligible one; and it is probably typical enough of the day-to-day experience of the Exchanges, though not necessarily typical of course of industry as a whole. Who exactly are these elderly disabled? It seems a good opportunity here to ask what bearing they have on the employment problems of older workers. What we have to say on the subject has possibly little reference to the present inquiry; but it will at least help us to clear the field for future research.

Now, we know a good deal about the extent of disablement registration, and how the disabilities have been medically classified. But the Ministry of Labour has never had occasion to analyse the men so registered into their age groups. Our only course was to sample the current registers of the Exchanges. Accordingly the Ministry agreed to have the age structure of disabled males returned by ten of its Exchanges in the London and South East Region of the country. The ten areas are varied both socially and industrially; and for the moment we shall have to accept them as sufficiently representative.

The ten Exchanges had among them (April 1955) a register of 26,908 disabled men of all ages, employed and unemployed. The men aged 60 and

over were 22.3 per cent of the 26,908. Seven of the Exchanges lay within a range 5 points above or below that level; the highest of all was 27.7 and the lowest 14.4. The factors responsible for these rather wide variations are obviously complex; but there is some relation between the percentages and the numbers of men still remaining on the register beyond the age of 65. Assuming for the sake of argument that 22 per cent or more of all registered disabled men in the country are aged 60 and over, we can make a fairly good guess what manner of men they are.

The total male disabled register of all ages in April 1954 was 744,863. The Act had been passed in 1944; and by 1950 the register had grown to a substantial size. 22 per cent of the 1954 total would be approximately 164,000, and a figure of 150-200,000 will thus have provisionally to be accepted. Now, we do further know that in April 1954 the disabled pensioners from the 1914-18 war on the Ministry's register numbered 128,291. It does not follow that all these men were actually in employment or even available for work; some of them may have retired, leaving their names on the register. But it surely seems probable enough that at least 60 or 70 per cent of the elderly disabled on the register represent in fact surviving casualties of the 1914-18 war. We further know from the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance that at the turn of 1953-4 the average age of all 1914-18 pensioners had been 63, including both those who had already retired and those who were still employed. While a few of them are doubtless still in their late fifties, the large majority of them must already lie within the age range with which we are here concerned.

In other words, the wave of war-disabled survivors is now beginning to break upon the shore of old age. Necessarily their numbers are diminishing. At the turn of 1953-54 the full number of 1914-18 pensioners was 284,484, 11,864 fewer than a year earlier. 95,128 of them are known to have been at that date aged 65 and over. At the turn of 1954-55 the number of 1914-18 pensioners was 273,335, 11,149 less than a year earlier. This is obviously affecting in turn the numbers on the Ministry of Labour's disablement register. The following Table shows the changes in the Ministry's 1914-18 register since 1950.

Table 2.

Numbers of 1914-18 'Disabled' on Successive Registers

| Date | Number of 1914-18 Disabled on Register |
|-----------|--|
| Apr. 1950 | 132,848 |
| Apr. 1953 | 130,407 |
| Apr. 1954 | 128,291 |
| Apr. 1955 | 125,923 |

In a few years' time, then, the numbers of effective men on the 1914-18 part of the register, i.e. those who are still available for employment, will have become very small. We shall still be left with a residue of war pensioners who are now in their late fifties. But unless the methods of registration alter or increasing numbers remain at work beyond their mid sixties, the problem arising from this source alone will have become far more manageable. It must not, however,

be assumed that the problem as a whole will vanish into air. The 1914-18 war left a large body of disabled pensioners; but it also killed about 750,000 men of the same ages. The net result is that the number of men at present in their sixties is considerably smaller than the number with which we shall probably be confronted in eight or ten years' time. This succeeding cohort will contain its fair proportion of men who are exposed to the effects of old age and all the handicaps of age; and thus the expected decline in the number of war pensioners may well be counterbalanced by an increase in the number of medically unfit men.

At the moment, however, the war pensioners account for a large proportion of the older registered disabled. As for the classes of disablement among them, we know that in April 1954 almost 90,000 of the 123,291 veterans of 1914-18 were registered as surgical cases, i.e. amputations, injuries and diseases of the head or trunk and of the lower and upper limbs, paraplegias, injuries and diseases of the spine, etc. Men of this kind will not be immediately replaced from the succeeding cohorts, though many of the medical and psychiatric cases could have succumbed to chronic complaints even without war. More than 3 in 5 of all the 1914-18 war pensioners are classified as up to 40 per cent disabled; and it may be assumed that the majority of the pensioners still on the employment register are among the relatively light cases.

We suggest, then, that somewhere between 150,000 and 200,000 of the men aged 60 and over are technically disabled, and that some 100,000 to 125,000 of these men are inherited casualties of the 1914-18 war. Beyond that there is little here to add, because technical disablement has no necessary bearing on a man's productive capacity, any more than an ageing man's failure or refusal to register is evidence that he is still thoroughly employable. Meanwhile, the effects of the 1939-45 war will be felt in the country for many years to come. As a matter of fact, if we had avoided the wars of this century, we might have reduced the present disablement register by 40 per cent or more.

This part of our report can now be left on one side; for, except where they are relevant to our study of the records, no further reference to the numbers of 'disabled' men will be necessary.

Pattern of the Placings of Older Men

Though we are concerned mainly with the records of those older men who have transferred to light or alternative employment, it is desirable to make a brief reference to the records as a whole. 1,178 men were placed at work in the course of a month. We have too little information about them to analyse them precisely into categories. But the general picture is fairly clear; and it has in it some curious characteristics. It must reflect to some extent the day-to-day experience of the Ministry's local offices.

The 537 men on lighter work fall into two distinct groups. 264 of them seem on the face of it to be moving at the moment from their ordinary work to new and less arduous jobs of one kind or another; we know in each case their previous occupations, and it is probable that the transitions are of fairly recent date. On the other hand, in the case of 273 such men we have no evidence about any previous jobs they may have had; all we know of them is that they are registered as needing a light or a less responsible job. A number of them may have been employed for some years past as watchmen, messengers, shop porters, etc. Some of them are probably war pensioners, since a good proportion of them are registered as disabled. The common characteristic of the whole group of 537 is that they are all men in their sixties and beyond,

prepared to enter some light employment.

But a further 574 men were placed in the jobs to which they seem to have been accustomed throughout their working lives. We may add to these a small group numbering 17, who were not placed in their normal jobs but moved to types of work that cannot be considered really light. These rather eccentric cases of transfer may be found at any age, though they are not so common among older men. No doubt some of this large body of men are no longer prepared to undertake the full range of duties; but they can mostly claim to be still normally employed. A much smaller proportion of them have been registered as disabled.

This accounts for most of the 1,178 men in our sample. We add two small groups, containing the remainder of the men. Almost certainly they do not reveal the full extent to which older men have to face problems of this kind; but they do at least indicate that the problems often affect an old man's prospects of employment. One group includes 30 men who were being placed only in temporary jobs, usually in the broad types of work to which they had been formerly accustomed. The final group covers 20 men who have probably been retired under work regulations at or about the age of 65; they are having to seek whatever alternative work they can find. Most of these 20 men had been in professional and clerical occupations. Admittedly this last small group is a somewhat arbitrary one, and has been included mainly in order to draw attention to transitions of this nature.

All these figures must be taken only as a general indication of what is happening to ageing employees. No other inference can be drawn from them. We had already known that many old men remain in their normal employment, many have to gravitate to light or alternative work, some are retired while still reasonably able-bodied men, some can only find at that age casual or seasonal employment.

We summarise the distribution of the 1,178 men in the following Table, and make a few comments on their occupations and ages.

Table 3
Placing Distribution of 1,178 Older Men

| Group | Ages | | | Total |
|---|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70+ | |
| 1. Men placed in customary jobs | 413 | 145 | 16 | 574 |
| 2. Men apparently fit but not placed in customary jobs | 12 | 5 | - | 17 |
| 3. Men apparently in transition to lighter jobs | 190 | 59 | 15 | 264 |
| 4. Men already settled in light jobs | 183 | 72 | 18 | 273 |
| 5. Men placed in casual or temporary work similar to their customary jobs | 25 | 5 | - | 30 |
| 6. Men probably discharged under retirement regulations, etc. | 10 | 10 | - | 20 |

It would not be safe to draw conclusions from the figures about the varied effectiveness of men to an advanced age. The Groups do not differ markedly in their age distributions; but it is noticeable that the proportion of men of 70 and over is far larger among those who were seeking light employment than among those who were still on their accustomed jobs.

About half the men in Group 5 were clerical or managerial in origin; they are placed in temporary work as poll clerks, enumerators, etc. About a third of the small number of men in Group 6 had been civil servants, teachers or army officers; others among them had probably had to relinquish work on the stage, in factory management or on the railways. They occasionally move to unskilled work, but we have no evidence that they are unfit. They probably represent the more adaptable types of older men, who are prepared to chance their hands at unaccustomed jobs.

Movements with Age into Light or Alternative Work

From now onwards we shall confine ourselves almost entirely to the 537 men who seem recently, or at some rather earlier date, to have transferred to lighter work of one kind or another. The jobs into which these men are moving are exactly the types of light labouring and servicing usually done in industry by elderly or disabled men. The only advantage to us in applying to the Ministry of Labour is that much more information can be collected about them in a short time.

As to the characteristics of the men themselves, we know already that in such industries as iron and steel, transport and building, a certain proportion of employees are compelled by age to move in their early sixties to lighter or less responsible work. It is usually at that stage a matter of chance or convenience whether they apply at an Exchange or directly to a new employer, though if they are under 65, and their employment is not excepted from the provisions of the Notification of Vacancies Order, their engagement must be notified to an Employment Exchange. An elderly man, who is becoming a less effective worker, realises that he may be retired by his Firm at 65; and this often suggests to him the advisability of looking ahead for a settled light occupation.

The experiences of these 537 old men and the jobs into which they variously move will, therefore, be taken as a fair cross-section of all movements of this kind that are regularly in progress.

347 of the 537 men, almost two-thirds of the lot, are moving (or have already moved) into the conventional 'light' jobs and services usually reckoned most suitable for ageing workers. A further 118 are stated simply to be moving to light factory labouring; and the residue were transferring to new jobs, in which they might require a short period of training.

Take first the 347 men who are becoming watchmen, messengers, handymen and the like. There is no reason to suppose that the ways in which they were distributing themselves among these jobs are anything but typical of the transitions of old age; and we therefore list their jobs and numbers: Watchmen 64. Cleaners (Factory, Machine, Office, etc.) 58. Shop Porters, etc. 57. Messengers 33. Handy-men 20. Commissionaires and Gatekeepers 18. Packers 17. Boilermen 15. Gardeners 14. Lift Attendants 11. Carotakers 9. Garage Attendants 8. Car Park Attendants 6. Sandwich-board Men 6. Road Orderlies 4. Bath and Messroom Attendants 3. Lavatory Attendants 3. Medical Orderlies 1.

It is probable, as we say, that elderly men find light jobs available in somewhere about those proportions. But we must qualify this a little in one or two respects. There seem, for example, to have been considerably

more 'messengers' placed than the 1951 Census figures would have suggested as likely. We have, as a matter of fact, some evidence that old men have more recently been replacing boys in a few branches of this occupation. The Census figures for old gardeners again (mostly no doubt jobbing gardeners) were unusually high; there were 21,200 of them aged 65 and over, as compared with 16,300 watchmen. The inference is that a good many of them do not turn up at the Exchanges but find their work in the suburbs and small towns of the country.

A few of the jobs need some further comment. Most of them can no doubt be taken as fairly settled jobs. But those of watchmen and sandwich-board men do tend to be casual. Shop porters and men in similar work are usually to be found in stores and retail establishments; they are employed for the most part on moving stock and various servicing jobs. Ageing messengers are employed to some extent in the National and Local Government Services, but they may also be found in increasing numbers in industrial or commercial undertakings. The term 'handyman' is probably applied to men who are working in institutions, blocks of flats, etc. In some industries the transfer and employment of elderly or disabled men on light packing is not an uncommon practice; the numbers thus employed in the country are likely to be higher than our figure would suggest, especially in areas with a shortage of young labour.

As we have said, 118 further men were recorded as simply moving to light factory labouring of some kind. What these 118 light labourers are all doing we are not precisely told; some of them, of course, may be engaged like the rest on cleaning, light portering, etc. But a good many are apparently servicing factory tradesmen or performing other light factory tasks such as that of a 'tea boy'. One may surmise that several of them are looking not only for less arduous work, but for work that will save them from exposure to the weather on building sites. As for their origins, it seems that about a third of them (so far as they are traceable) had previously been heavy factory or building labourers and 15 per cent had been drivers; the remainder were formerly skilled or semi-skilled workers in manufacturing, building and commerce.

We thus assume that 455 out of the 537 men (i.e. about 85 per cent) have been gravitating either to light factory labouring of some kind or to one or other of the various light jobs described above. It cannot, of course, be taken for granted that these transitions were always of recent date; some of the 'disabled men' may have been so registered for a number of years. But it is noticeable that all the jobs described are reckoned appropriate for men who are obviously ageing. Employment as electric passenger lift attendants and car park attendants is reserved by statutory regulation for registered disabled persons; it is thus not surprising that only one of the 17 men placed in these jobs is not a disabled man. Shop porters, gate keepers, cleaners, watchmen, packers and garage attendants have all an unusually large number of disabled men among them, especially the watchmen and gate keepers. On the other hand, the 101 men who became messengers, gardeners, boilermen, caretakers, sandwich-board men, handy-men and road orderlies had among them only 24 disabled. Old men who are no longer able-bodied seem, in fact, to have little chance of becoming caretakers or handy-men. None of the 'disabled' in our sample have undertaken sandwich-board work. Government messengers, of course, are often war-disabled men, but these would not invariably have passed through the Exchanges.

We need trouble ourselves no further with any distinction that may be drawn between the disabled and the able-bodied; but a more careful inquiry into the physical handicaps of such men as watchmen, cleaners and shop porters would probably be worth undertaking.

We should rather expect to find that the new job into which an

elderly men moves is determined in no small measure by the industrial experience of his earlier life. But there are many curious exceptions and anomalies. While about two-thirds of the watchmen (as far as we can judge) have been factory or building labourers, a number of them were formerly skilled or semi-skilled operatives, clerks and inspectors. An even higher proportion of the cleaners had been at one time factory operatives, drivers or postal and rail workers; but about half of them had probably been unskilled labourers. On the other hand, only about 15 per cent of the messengers whose origin is known had at one time been labourers; messengers were recruited mainly from among clerks and from the postal and bus services.

We are left so far with a few clear impressions. There are no doubt many forms of alternative work, to which elderly men move on occasion; but it looks as though at least six in ten of them move to one or other of a number of definable jobs, most of them as watchmen, cleaners, gardeners, shop porters or messengers. It seems, however, that we cannot assume that the men who move to light work of this kind or to light factory labouring have necessarily been unskilled labourers all their lives; a surprisingly large number were previously employed on skilled or semi-skilled work.

A residue of 72 out of the 537 old men were not moving strictly into light work but into new occupations involving less strain or responsibility; in that sense the work could be called 'light'. A few examples illustrate the types of transition one occasionally finds. Thus an old railway coal teamer was placed as a storeman, a builder's labourer as a cotton waster and a seaman as a workshop attendant. Again, a painter had become a bread van loader; a motor driver had transferred to grocery despatch, a post office inspector to clerical work, and a refuse collector to a job as metal polisher. Several of the men were being employed in later life as switchboard operators; and some drivers and postmen were found work as waiters, showroom attendants, routine clerks and personal servants. Among the other jobs to which ageing men moved were those of laundryman, electric truck driver, bottler and cotton trimmer. It is nevertheless not possible to be quite sure that we are in every case observing a real transition to lighter work; we can only judge from what we know about their former occupations. As we have said, many of these jobs would involve a modicum of training; and they serve to show that elderly men can make the transfer. Some of the movements may be accounted for by scarcity of young labour.

It must here be observed that relatively few of the old men who had not had previous experience in such occupations were placed in light assembly and light packing jobs. Why not? We know that, given the chance, they are frequently able to master the operations, provided the pace is restrained. A clear demonstration in industry that inexperienced elderly men are quite capable of attaining the necessary skill would do more than anything to open up fresh avenues of alternative employment. We are still in the age of the traditional 'old man's jobs', the light unskilled labouring and servicing that have always been the lot of the ageing and infirm.

There is, however, some evidence that ageing men who have transferred to an alternative job have a good chance of prolonging their working lives. Though this depends upon the policy of their employers, they can frequently remain to an advanced age (see Appendix II, p.25).

Influence of Season on the Employment Prospects

The records we have just been analysing refer to only one month in the year; and it is important to know whether that month was in any way exceptional. We could not ask that the Ministry's officers should repeat the process month by month; but we could at

least make arrangements with a single Exchange to provide us with the information. The area covered by this Exchange is one of mixed manufacturing, e.g. furniture, building, light engineering, tailoring and miscellaneous light products. We are very sensible of the kindly co-operation given us by the Ministry's officers, and more particularly because they were often able to make useful comments on the month-to-month fluctuations.

Returns were sent to us monthly from April 1954 to March 1955; this was, of course, a period of high demand for labour. Let us assume (for in any case we have no alternative) that the experience of this Exchange was reasonably typical. What happened, in brief, was that the placings of older men were relatively high in the spring and early summer, and then fell to a much lower constant level through the late summer and autumn to rise again to a peak in late November and December. The up-turn at the year's end was due to the usual seasonal demand for temporary labour, especially in the post office; in fact, about half the placings of older men in December were as temporary postmen.

It was fairly easy for officers to distinguish what men were still following their normal occupations and what men were then gravitating to light or alternative jobs. In the course of the year the Exchange placed 375 men aged 60 and over in jobs of one kind or another (including the temporary placings at Christmas). 145 of them (38.6 per cent) were moving into alternative work. The proportion of men placed in light or alternative work was especially high in the summer months, apart of course from the Christmas peak, and this was in spite of the relatively low total placings in the summer. There are several factors that could account for this, even if we allow that shortage of labour was then making employers more responsive. Elderly and rather infirm men do at times leave employment through the winter months; and industrial summer holidays may call for temporary replacements of relatively light labour. It is probably significant that as age advances the proportion of men seeking alternative occupations slowly increases. About 36 per cent of those who were moving to alternative work were aged 65 and over, whereas only 29 per cent of those who were still following their normal jobs fall into the same group of elderly men.

The light jobs many of the men were undertaking make a pattern that is by no means dissimilar from our main sample if we allow for all the variations of time and place. Omitting the temporary postmen we have 118 transitions to alternative work to account for. 30 of them were placed on light factory labouring; but not all of these had spent their lives as unskilled labourers. 16 others were placed as routine clerks. These men had presumably all been clerical workers, the fact being that they had settled with age into a non-progressive job, often after retiring from a more responsible position. This is an aspect of the whole problem that we have so far omitted and that certainly needs more careful investigation. The numbers of men who were placed in the conventional 'light' jobs of old age run as follows: Watchman 21. Cleaners and Sweepers 14. Shop and Factory Porters 5. Handymen 4. Hall and Cinema Attendants 3. Gardeners and Parkmen 3. Packers 2. Boilerman 1. Lift Attendant 1. Park Keeper 1. Petrol Pump Attendant 1. Bath Attendant 1. Time-Keeper 1. Hospital Porter 1. Car-washer 1.

The main point to notice is that no men were placed as messengers; and no doubt the demand for messengers varies considerably from area to area. Beyond the men listed above we have a few who were certainly moving to alternative jobs but moving in an unusual direction. They are mostly in fact training for new occupations at a late age, e.g. as boot and shoe stainer, hand sander (furniture), packing case assembler, cabinet fitter, French polisher (improver), telephone operator and viewer (tailoring). Some of these men are well on in

years; the trainee French polisher, for instance, was 71, and a man of 68 was placed as a progress chaser in a tailoring firm though admittedly he had had tailoring experience.

This merely serves to confirm what we already know, that ageing men can often acquire new skills, provided the pace of work is restrained and the training well planned.

It is clear from the year's experience that the employability of old men, whether in their normal occupations or in some other capacity, is very sensitive to the state of the labour market. A seasonal decline in e.g. tailoring, furniture or building immediately affects the prospects of the ageing. On the other hand, a chronic shortage of labour has a gradual but marked influence on employers. Rejections may still be high (they were high, for example, in October), but employers are at least more prepared to interview. In effect, as the reserves of older labour are absorbed into any likely job, we come closer and closer to the 'hard core' of near unemployables. Since we have no means of finding out the numbers involved in the complex pattern of employment and re-employment, there is little more as yet to say on the subject.

This brief summary suggests that there was nothing unusual about the month (Oct.-Nov.) to which our main records refer. This is ordinarily a month of rising employment and some symptoms of increased labour mobility; but it has not yet felt the full influence of seasonal demand. Through the whole course of the year old men who have left their customary occupations are moving into much the same types of light job and distributing themselves among these jobs in much the same proportions. Only the seasonal demands for temporary labour, e.g. at Christmas, or in the summer resorts, may disturb the normal flow of employment and produce sudden fluctuations. But it must be recognised that any slight decline in a local industry may have an immediate and perceptible influence on the employment prospects of the ageing.

Significance of 'Light Work' in the Age Problem

In referring to old men who have to leave their customary jobs we have used rather indifferently the terms 'light' and 'alternative' work. Since the term 'light' work is constantly making its appearance in the Exchange records, it is as well to see what significance it has in the employment of older men as a whole. Though it is a conventional term, is it really a satisfactory one?

It may be observed that 232 out of the 1,178 men (i.e. about 20 per cent) were noted somewhere in their records as being suitable only for light work of some kind. This usually means that a man carries a recommendation of that nature from his medical practitioner. But the entry might be made by an Officer at the Exchange on his own initiative, when the applicant is obviously in poor health.

The description can never be a precise one; it is open to some criticism; and it must not be confused with the more precise term 'disabled'. As a matter of fact, 113 of these 232 men were also registered as 'disabled'; and some of them may, for all we know, have been in the 'light work' category for most of their working lives.

The Ministry has had no occasion to estimate the numbers of men recorded on the 'light work' files of its local offices. But a small survey was made for us in ten of the Exchanges; and this shows that just under a third of the men so recorded were aged 60 and over. In several of the ten Exchanges this proportion was fairly consistent, though in two of them the proportion had not risen above a fifth. If almost a third of all men in the 'light work' category are really aged 60 and over, there cannot be a very high percentage of 'light work'.

applicants among the much larger bodies of men signing on between the ages of 18 and 59; at a rough estimate from the known figures of such applicants the proportion among them could scarcely exceed 1.5 per cent. While some of this 1.5 per cent may represent the casualties of the 1939-45 war, a considerable part of it is probably composed of men who are only temporarily in need of light employment. On the other hand, the older men in this category represent, as we have seen, almost 20 per cent of our whole sample of 'over 60s'.

It is probable, then, that if the Ministry asked for a return of all its current 'light work' records it would find their proportionate numbers rising with age from below 1 per cent in the youngest age groups to over 20 per cent in the later sixties. We cannot, of course, assume that the same proportions would apply throughout the whole of modern industry; for we are only seeing the men who have turned up at the Exchanges; many of them are no doubt at the Exchanges merely because they have to look for a light form of employment.

An experienced industrial medical officer would usually avoid a term of this kind. But it is difficult to see how a placing officer at an Exchange could adopt for his purpose any description of a more definite medical nature. The fact still remains that the proportionate numbers increase with age, and that ageing men have often to be transferred from their customary work.

Commentary

We know enough by this time about the kinds of work that are made available to elderly men to comment on the general position to-day. What the Exchanges have to tell us of local opportunities is here often helpful.

1. There is nothing very novel about the various jobs we have listed. Elderly men have been employed as light labourers, watchmen, cleaners, messengers, etc. for generations past. The occupations are, in fact, among those that have survived with us from a largely unmechanised world. Though the jobs have obviously to be done, the employment opportunities they offer are not unlimited. A few of them indeed, e.g. some processes in light packing and light factory labouring, are now progressively becoming mechanised. It is possible that industrial changes will close many of the traditional avenues of employment, unless we reconsider our attitude towards older men and the work held to be suitable for them. On the other hand, of course, mechanisation should in many cases ease the load upon the ageing worker; but to what extent remains to be seen.
2. It must be realised that too many of the jobs now available are of a casual, seasonal or temporary nature. One in four of the 141 Exchanges make reference to this; and in many instances they have no other likely jobs to suggest. A good deal of the temporary work is clerical. Several of the Exchanges mention the placing of temporary routine clerks in the Electricity Board, the Post Office and Insurance; and these seem usually jobs of short duration. Among the occasional jobs offered to older men by the local authorities are those of poll clerks, traffic census enumerators and enumerators for the electoral roll. Casual work of this kind is common throughout the country, but otherwise much depends on the local conditions. Some port areas, for example, refer to the frequent opportunities older men have for casual work on the unloading of perishable cargoes, or

elderly welders, caulkers, riveters, etc. on ship repairing jobs. One area of mixed small-size factories mentions the chances of part-time work that are open at periods to pensioners. Sports and holiday resorts can usually place a number of elderly men nowadays on temporary work as e.g. kitchen porters, golf caddies, bill distributors, gate men, car park attendants, attendants at sports and amusements grounds and on gathering up waste paper after racing and sports meetings. In one area of this type there would have been few openings in the winter except for temporary postmen, though a local sugar beet factory was able to absorb a small proportion of older men through the campaign season.

The seasonal aspect of demand is more obvious in the holiday resorts than elsewhere; but it is not confined to them. Where a dominant industry of an area is hotel and catering, an age barrier seems rarely to be imposed. It is commented that elderly cooks and kitchen hands are engaged, but that this is largely due to the fact that the demand for young labour regularly exceeds the supply. It is stated, however, from one large seaside resort that from the end of the season few if any of the available jobs are suitable for elderly men, unless on occasion they can be placed as watchmen. In industrial areas the holiday season has a complementary influence on the employment of elderly labour, in that a few may be needed for temporary replacement work, e.g. tobacco manufacturers in various parts of the country taking on elderly relief workers during the summer months.

3. It has become evident that employment opportunities vary not only seasonally but locally. Where an old man lives or the place to which he moves affects his chances of finding a settled job. This is obvious from some of the comments made by the Exchanges. A few of these comments may briefly be summarised, reaching us as they do from widely dispersed areas:-
 - (a) 'Scope for placing elderly workers is limited here, especially in that many vacancies are subject to age limits; the desire of employers to retain their older workers is, however, noticeable.'
 - (b) 'This is an industrial area, and there are few opportunities for placing men as commissionaires, porters, etc.'
 - (c) 'Most workers over 60 attending this office are unskilled, and there is usually no difficulty in placing them if they are fit to perform the duties required; but as this is a heavy industrial area, there is less scope for older men who are not reasonably fit.'
 - (d) 'In this area where coal mining, quarrying, bricks and iron manufacture predominate, the placing of elderly men has been difficult.'
 - (e) 'The main openings for unskilled men in the older ages lie in building and in Government general stores as labourers; but men of 60 and over tend to be rather difficult placing propositions, and the difficulty increases with age.'
 - (f) 'It is very difficult here to find employment for men over 60 in anything but temporary, unskilled employment.'

- (g) 'The local heavy industries (tin plate, steel sheet manufacture and steel making) have a tradition of retaining old employees till they are too feeble to attend at the works; we do not regard it locally as a major problem.'
- (h) 'It is usually possible to place elderly unskilled men in light employment e.g. light assembly, viewing, packing of small articles, stores; but it may be necessary to make a special approach to employers in some cases.'
- (i) 'Owing to the fact that iron foundry is the predominant industry, and that there is a lack of alternative and lighter industries, older men who have been forced by age to leave normal employment are faced with a limited field.'
- (j) 'There is in this area a tendency for industrial workers on approaching the age of 60 to seek employment in National Government Service; there are large headquarter branches of Government Departments and army camps, where vacancies do occur to meet this trend.'
- (k) 'Where increasing age is accompanied by failing health and a man has to seek lighter employment, we experience great difficulty in placing him; the vacancies (e.g. for cleaners, caretakers, lodge keepers, watchmen and janitors) only occur at intervals, and the number seeking such employment invariably exceeds the jobs available.'

On the assumption that those statements can all be accepted as of equal value, we have clearly to avoid any country-wide generalisations about the opportunities open to older men.

- 4. There is one point that is perhaps worth making about 'jobs for the ageing'. Many of those we have listed do at least imply a modest amount of authority. They carry an element of status; the man is temporarily charged with a responsibility for something or someone. The fact that the jobs have a common characteristic suggests that it would be useful to examine the theory of their place in our economy. They are necessary services and mostly done by men at their own pace of movement; more might be achieved by way of raising the status of many of them. But it is improbable that the number of jobs available could be greatly increased to meet a foreseeable increase in demand. In some of the large industrial concerns there may already be found elderly employees retained on odd jobs that are not strictly economic; and commendable as this practice is, it has its obvious limitations.
- 5. If one important aspect of the employment problem of the ageing has been adequately summed up in this report, we clearly have to break away to some extent from the well-worn methods of trying to solve it. These traditional jobs can still be handed out to a certain number of old men who are no longer fully effective employees. But in many industries to-day the numbers who have reached that critical stage by about their mid sixties are not small. Any careful study of medical and industrial records reveals a series of transfers to lighter or alternative work that may on occasion amount to near 15 or 20 per cent of the older employees.

We must begin to think in terms of any types of processing, assembly, packing and stores work in which pace need not be of primary consideration. There are at present serious difficulties. Many areas have little such work to offer, even supposing employers were prepared to make the experiment. Moreover, most, though by no means all, factories that take on and train a few suitable older men seem to be doing so mainly because young labour is scarce or unstable. The experiment is often successful as far as it goes; but one has to realise that in many industrial processes a large replacement of young by older labour would almost certainly involve a measurable decline somewhere in the rate of output. A large intake of older labour usually means that you have to absorb among them a proportion of less trainable and efficient men. There is no getting away from the fact that, so far as industry as a whole has to use an increasing number of transferred elderly men, the rate of production in the country will probably decline slightly but perceptibly.

We are near exhausting all the traditional avenues of transfer to light work. If, then, we really want to give ageing men a greater opportunity of remaining in employment, we may soon have to plan for it on a more comprehensive scale.

Conclusion

It was not expected that an examination of the placing records of the Ministry of Labour and National Service would tell us much about the fortunes of older men in industry as a whole. The sample we had from the Ministry was naturally representative only of the Ministry's own experience of these problems, and that experience is not a complete one.

It was, however, expected that we should get from the records a much deeper insight into the movements of such of the older men as have to look for light or alternative employment. There are certainly many ageing men who reach that stage in their later working lives; and we had recognised that it is one of the critical aspects of the age problem in industry. Our expectation seems here to have been justified.

Any inquiry that neglects the subject must nowadays be rather unrealistic. In this report we have attempted to come to closer grips with it. The only question that now remains is:- 'How many of the older men in the country are probably involved in making, or trying to make, transitions of this kind?' No one could give us yet a conclusive answer to the question. But a provisional estimate may be made from Tables published in a recent official report; the inquiry upon which the report was based was, however, of such a sort as to demand a rather critical attitude towards it.

The Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance Report on 'Reasons Given for Retiring or Continuing at Work' (H.M.S.O. 1954) provides information about two distinct samples - one consisting of persons who reached a minimum pension age within the space of four weeks, and the other of new retirement pensioners. It analyses inter alia the reasons given by men for retiring at the age of 65. The inquiry covered all the men to whom in the four weeks ending October 11th 1953 the local offices sent notice of the award of a retirement pension (whether the men were themselves proposing to retire at that age or to remain at work). It was decided not to interview 2.9 per cent of all the men who had reached the age of 65, because in their cases the retirement pensions followed a spell of not less than six months' illness. These men were classified in the report as 'chronically sick'. It is obvious, of course, that they may not in every case have succumbed to a chronic complaint. But if we make allowance for a number of men who had retired more than five years before age 65, it can be assumed that about 10 per cent of all men who had survived to 65 years are probably by that age unfitted for work or

fit only for work of the lightest kind.

A further 9.8 per cent of all the men who reached 65 years stated that they were then retiring through ill health, 1.4 per cent because of the heaviness or strain of their jobs, and 2.7 per cent because in their view they needed rest or leisure. These, be it noted, were their own explanations for deciding to retire at that age; and a study of the records of claims to sickness benefit and of the nature of their jobs did not necessarily confirm what they had to say. Moreover, some of the men proffered various reasons for retirement, and these reasons should not strictly be viewed in isolation. But if an investigator relies on statements of this kind he has usually no course but to accept or reject them as a whole; a sense of strain or of incipient ill health may be a very personal affair, especially in later life.

According to the Ministry, then, 13.9 per cent of all the men who reached the age of 65, over and above the 9.9 per cent who were chronically sick, chose to retire at that age by reason of ill health, strain or need for a rest.

We come then to a further 11.2 per cent who stated that they had been retired or discharged by their employers. This figure was confirmed by inquiries directed to some of the employers themselves. We know that compulsory retirement is still the practice in many industries. But we are not told by the report in how many of these cases employers were retiring their men because they honestly considered them no longer effective employees. It is probable that with a number of the men this is precisely what had happened. For example, in building and contracting 7.0 per cent of men reaching 65 years had been retired or discharged by their employers, in metal manufacture 5.0, in textiles, leather and furs 4.3, in mining and quarrying 2.5, and in agriculture, forestry and fisheries 1.3 per cent. In these large industries comparatively few employees seem to be subject to a fixed retiring age, though occasionally a retiring age is imposed. A number of men had, of course, retired from these industries on the grounds of ill health; but discharge by an employer may be due not to a man's ill health but simply to the evidence of his increasing incapacity for work. It is reasonable to conjecture that perhaps one in three or one in four of all the men who were thus retired or discharged may have had to give up their old jobs because they were not judged to be any longer employable, at all events on their customary work.

On this assumption we have to suppose that almost 17 per cent of the men who reach 65 years may no longer be capable of their full range of duties, and that a further 10 per cent are almost or quite beyond work. This agrees reasonably well with some of the medico-industrial records that have been studied; the proportion of elderly men transferred by managements to lighter forms of work may at times be as high as this, but it varies widely from occupation to occupation. The Ministry's report is not conclusive on the significance of such industrial transfers or on the extent to which the men who were taking their pensions had failed to find a satisfying new job. Yet these are crucial questions and certainly need careful investigation.

Until we can get more light on the subject, we may as well adopt the working hypothesis that somewhere around 15 or 20 per cent of all men in their early and mid sixties probably need to be given either the chance of a new job or working conditions better suited to their age. Against this yardstick of demand we should have to measure the current supply of lighter jobs available in the country. Whatever other reasons old men may have for retiring from work, it would be absurd to ignore this very practical one, rooted as it is in the commonplaces of biological ageing.

APPENDIX I

Older Men in Selected Occupations

It was mentioned (p.7) that only four of the industrial groups found in our records seem sufficiently typical of most of the older men in these occupations to make a closer study of them worth our while. These were the labourers, building craftsmen, transport workers and clerks. No other of the numerous trades and occupations represented in the records is likely to have been composed of any but occasional ageing applicants who might or might not have been typical of their kind. The four groups will be briefly examined to see what further light they throw on the whole problem.

1. Labourers

It seems probable that the old labourers are fairly representative of their kind and age. There are 223 men who appear to have been employed through most of their working lives as factory labourers, building labourers, road labourers, general porters, stokers, etc. No doubt there were others of the same type whose previous careers are not traceable. What we know of these 223 labourers is that 144 of them were still more or less fit for their customary work, while 79 were then moving to lighter work. Less than 10 per cent of the really effective men were past their mid sixties; and in several cases they were probably restricting the scope of their work. They were, for instance, moving into building repairs, or from outside labouring to a factory job.

It is perhaps not surprising that more than one in three of the old labourers are transferring to less arduous work. They are far more likely to do so than are many types of craftsman. According to the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance Report on 'Reasons Given for Retiring, etc.', 39.6 per cent of the unskilled workers who retired had retired from employment before reaching the age of 66, as compared with 28.7 per cent of building craftsmen. Again, 26.9 per cent of the unskilled workers who reached 65 stated that they were retiring at that age either through ill health and strain or because they were being discharged by their employers, whereas only 19.9 per cent of the building craftsmen who reached that age gave the same reasons for retiring. Labourers and building craftsmen are not usually subject to a fixed retiring age; and it may therefore often be assumed that, when an employer discharges a man at 65, it means that he is no longer fully effective.

It may be reckoned, then, that more than one in three of the old labourers manage to find some light form of work. They would otherwise have to retire around the pensionable age. Even as it is, considerable numbers of them do then retire. For this there may be various reasons; but if we can take their own statements as true, more than half of those who do retire have been discharged by their employers, or are seeking some relief from strain and ill health. The Ministry of Labour records, of course, include only those elderly men who are still in the labour market. We cannot tell how many of them are likely to be retiring in the near future. But since the proportion moving to light work seems to increase with age, it is probable that the more failure to find suitable work is one of the main influences in their decision to retire.

2. Building Craftsmen

The old building craftsmen, too, are probably a fairly representative group. Only about 8 per cent of them show any signs of moving to lighter work, and several of these are obviously moving to jobs closely allied to their own. Two painters and a plumber, however, were placed as light labourers of some kind, and one old painter as a warehouseman. It does not, of course, follow that all the men on normal work were still capable of the full range of duties. About a third of them were aged 65 and over, and their ages ranged up to the eighties. There is one interesting distinction between the painters and their fellow craftsmen. Less than 25 per cent of the painters who remained in their normal jobs were aged 65 and over, whereas the proportion among the other craftsmen (almost half were carpenters) was one of 35 per cent or more. This confirms the general impression that elderly house painters cannot so readily adjust themselves to the pace and hazards of their normal work. They have a somewhat greater tendency than other building craftsmen to move with age to an alternative occupation.

3. Transport Workers

39 of the men in our records are known to have been transport workers on the roads or railways. The numbers are small, but these men are often subject to a retiring age, and it is thought probable that a fairly typical body of them would then apply at the Exchanges. Only 8 of the men, all in their early sixties, were found driving jobs on road vehicles. The rest were definitely moving out of transport. Since 12 of these were aged 65 or so, we can suspect that a retiring age had some influence. But in any case a number of drivers and conductors quit the service for health reasons before reaching their mid sixties; and some of them think it then advisable to seek a settled job outside the industry.

The only important question is what kind of alternative work such men can undertake. A few of them found work as transport clerks, hospital handy-men, car showroom attendants, etc.; but 13 of the 31 who quitted driving moved to relatively unskilled types of work as shop or hotel porters, cleaners, factory labourers and watchmen; 5 of them were employed as messengers.

On the face of it, this does not suggest that the old transport worker has a wide field of alternative jobs open to him. What proportion of these transport drivers who have retired from the industry at about the age of 65 go then in search of alternative work, we do not know. But unless they have some prospect of finding a job that will satisfy them, they are certainly tempted to retire out of hand.

4. Clerks

90 of the men in our records are known to have been clerical workers; and they too are probably typical enough of the older men in this profession. 74 of them (51 under 65 years) are still following their normal or some closely allied occupation, though some of these men have undoubtedly taken on work of a routine nature. Only one of them was over 70. Precisely how many of the elderly clerks can find only temporary jobs is not clear. Certainly 12 and probably more were being employed as poll clerks, canvassers or enumerators.

A further 16 elderly clerks are traceable as moving to new jobs. Several of these had certainly been retired from their previous employment. The new jobs they were then undertaking were those of messengers, storeroom, pump attendants, watchmen and janitors. The two oldest were both aged 79; one had been placed as a watchman and the other as 'Father Christmas' in a stores.

The impression one gains from comments made by the Exchanges is that the employment prospects of elderly clerks vary to a considerable extent from area to area. Many of the clerical jobs, at a guess about one in five, tend to be casual; and many others are seasonal in character.

APPENDIX II

Prolongation of the Working Life

It was stated (p.14) that transfer to a new job probably tends to prolong the working lives of many older men. The following Table needs a short explanation. It is admittedly suggestive rather than so far convincing.

The Census Tables of Age and Occupation have always to be handled cautiously. The 1951 Census shows the numbers of men of various ages who were at work in that year in any given occupation. But one has to remember that the actual numbers of older men still at work are the end-result of forty or fifty years of a chequered industrial history. In that long period of time an occupation may have been subject to many curious fluctuations in the levels of intake and outgoing, as the industry itself had expanded or contracted. In consequence, the numbers of men aged say 60 and over, who are still at work in any given year, may be no evidence of the real capacity of older men to remain in that job; their numbers might be abnormally large or abnormally small, simply because thirty or forty years earlier the industry had been for a short period expanding or contracting.

But there is one question we may ask with some confidence, when comparing one job with another; and that question is:- 'What relative numbers of men are still at work on these jobs from the age of 70 upwards?' In most manual occupations few men would have retired from work before the age of 65, though there is of course a certain wastage always going on in the early sixties due to invalidity and other causes. Over their later sixties, however, men are retiring from employment at very varying rates. Assuming that the men are not subject to a fixed retiring age at 65 (a most necessary proviso), they then quit work year by year in increasing numbers; and the proportion retiring year by year reflects in some degree the relative physical or mental strain to which they are exposed. We are finally left with a body of survivors working into their seventies and beyond.

We are here listing a group of the occupations that are known not to be ordinarily subject to any fixed retiring age. The jobs these men have to do are all clearly definable. The figures are extracted from the Tables published in the 1951 Census (1 per cent sample). The numbers at work aged 60-64, i.e. before reaching the pensionable age, are compared with the numbers still at work from the age of 70 upwards. The ratios between the two age groups are shown by taking the numbers aged 60-64 as in each case 100. A glance at the Table reveals at once a wide disparity among the occupations. If this is not conclusive, it at least suggests the need of further investigation. The characteristics of most of these jobs, be it noted, have not changed to any marked extent over the last quarter of a century.

Table 4

Proportions of Men Still Occupied at Ages 70 and Over

(as compared with men aged 60-64)

| <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Age</u> | | <u>Ratios</u> 60-64 : 70+ (60-64 taken as 100) |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--|
| | <u>60-64</u> | <u>70 & over</u> | |
| Platers | 3,300 | 200 | 100 : 6.0 |
| Fishermen | 2,200 | 200 | 9.0 |
| Foundrymen (Moulders) | 2,500 | 300 | 12.0 |
| Civil Engineering Labourers | 27,000 | 4,200 | 15.6 |
| Forgemen. Pressmen | 600 | 100 | 16.7 |
| Coal Face Miners (hand got) | 8,200 | 1,400 | 17.0 |
| Miners (surface workers) | 7,800 | 1,600 | 20.6 |
| Bakers and Pastrycooks | 4,400 | 1,200 | 27.3 |
| Blacksmiths | 5,800 | 1,700 | 29.4 |
| Carpenters | 13,300 | 4,000 | 30.0 |
| Compositors | 2,900 | 900 | 31.0 |
| Plumbers | 4,300 | 1,400 | 32.6 |
| Messengers | 4,200 | 1,600 | 38.0 |
| Workers in Precious Metals | 500 | 200 | 40.0 |
| Dockers | 5,800 | 2,500 | 43.2 |
| Textile Labourers | 6,000 | 2,700 | 45.0 |
| Office Cleaners (1) | 2,800 | 1,300 | 46.5 |
| Gardeners | 17,100 | 10,900 | 63.8 |
| Watchmen | 11,000 | 8,100 | 73.4 |
| All Occupied Males | 918,200 | 272,900 | 100 : 29.8 |

- (1) This comprises, of course, only a few of the male cleaners employed in industry and commerce.

So far as these ratios go, they suggest that craftsmen and skilled tradesmen who can in some measure adapt their mode and pace of work to their age are capable of remaining later on the job than heavy mining, metal and civil engineering workers. Dockers and certain factory labourers have also probably some chances of adjustment. But some at least of the jobs to which older men are known to transfer seem to give them an unusually good opportunity of continuing in employment.

We are not, however, implying that the work of watchmen or office cleaners is necessarily suited to the physical powers of the older men.