

## **REPORT ON RECRUITMENT OF IRISH LABOUR FOR THE CANAL INDUSTRY.**

This is a report covering my activities as Representative in Eire for the recruitment of Irish Labour, and while I will endeavour to submit a full report you will appreciate that there are difficulties which have arisen from time to time too numerous to mention.

When I made my first visit in October 1942 it was for the specific purpose of recruiting Irish workers for Canal Transport Ltd. who were willing to experiment with a view to assessing the suitability of Irish Labour for the Canal Industry as a whole. On arrival in Dublin I made the following contacts, Mr. Toms (Liaison Officer, British Ministry of Labour & National Service), who gave me all possible assistance as to the methods which were to be adopted in the recruitment of Irish Labour. I made myself known to the various sections of Mr. Tom's staff, all of whom gave me very great help, when and as required. I contacted Mr. Scott of The Grand Canal, The Chief Engineer of The Royal Canal, Mr. Ted Hart (Transport & General Workers' Union), Mr. Broughton (Traffic Manager of The London Midland & Scottish Railway). I had a long conversation with Mr. Scott who unfortunately was not very encouraging, as he informed me that his own Company were short of skilled boatmen and that the position would become more acute, as The Eire Government had decided and commenced to build 20 craft for use on the Grand Canal. Owing to the restrictions on the import of fuel, huge quantities of turf and timber would have to be canal borne from the country to the city of Dublin. I then made contact with Mr. Hart who was more hopeful and said that he would make it known that a representative was present in Dublin recruiting labour for the Canal Industry. Mr. Hart informed me that he knew of a number of men with craft experience and would arrange for them to meet me at his office in two or three days time. During these two or three days I made arrangements for the necessary printing and also travelling facilities. Within the next fortnight the influx of men who were anxious to work in England on the canals was such as to make me feel very optimistic regarding the possibilities for the future. I proceeded to interview each man separately and make a note of his qualifications and experience, and when I had interviewed approximately 60 men I selected the most likely men for boatmen, maintenance labourers and warehouse porters and lodged individual offers of employment with the Liaison Officer in Dublin, sufficient to meet the requirements of Canal Transport, Ltd and The Leeds & Liverpool Canal Company.

I returned to this Country to report on the possibilities of recruiting labour for other firms in the Canal Industry and I was of the opinion that a certain number of men were available who would be willing to accept work in England, providing wages and conditions were satisfactory, and as it was the wish of the Liaison Officer Dublin that the organization should not be closed down if there was a likelihood of further requirements, it was decided to proceed with the recruitment.

I returned to Eire in November to make the necessary arrangements for the men already recruited and to further explore the Country for suitable men. It was the first week in December when the first man left Eire and approximately 20 men arrived in England by the end of December. On the 10th of December I received instructions regarding additional requirements of the Canal Industry. During my investigations I was informed that there were quite a number of good type men on the South and West of Eire, and so I proceeded to visit Arklow, Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford, Carrick-on-Suir and a number of other places on the coast. I contacted the local Secretary of The Transport & General Workers' Union in Carrick-on-Suir, and he gave me the names of a number of men with boating and dredging experience, also boat builders. All these men I located and interviewed and signed on at least 40 men. About this time there arrived in Dublin yet another representative recruiting labour for British Shipbuilders and competition became very acute. There was no less than 40 representatives following each other from place to place, most of them seeking male labour. I am afraid that some of the representatives painted a good picture as to the wages and conditions available with the Industries which they represented. At this time all my recruiting was being done

on individual offers of employment. I interviewed a man and submitted my offer of work to the Liaison Officer Dublin, who passed it forward in due course to The Ministry of Industry and Commerce, who after making all the necessary enquiries regarding the previous occupation of the man, passed the offer to the respective Labour Exchange, and if they man was not from an Agricultural district or not registered as a turf worker called him to the Labour Exchange and handed to him the offer of work, duly stamped. Once in possession of this the man could apply to External Affairs for a travel Permit. The chief difficulty I have had with men from the South and West is that you lose contact with your man unless you can stay in the locality in which he was recruited, until such times as his offer of work comes through. The following will give you some idea of how the men fail to take up the jobs offered.

I recruit a number of men on a certain day, say in Waterford and leave to go to Carrick-on-Suir, a day or two after I lodge my offer of work with the Authorities in Dublin. In the meantime, another representative has arrived at Waterford who is recruiting through the Labour Exchange, and this representative hands out preference slips to all the men he can find and instructs them to register at the Local Exchange. It has happened that a number of men interviewed by me accept these slips and register. In due course they are called for interview at the Exchange by the representative who handed them the slip and he signs them on. When my individual offer arrives at The Local Exchange the Manager discovers that this man has already signed a contract and returns my offer to Headquarters. After waiting a reasonable time I circularise the men concerned asking them if they intend to take up the job offered, and nine times out of ten I receive no reply. To overcome this I collected at the time of engagement travel Permits belonging to men engaged and in many instances I have had to return these as the men informed me that they did not wish to travel. During the whole time I have been recruiting I have been up against the wage problem. My rates for boatmen in practically all Regions were not comparable with the rates for factory work, where a minimum number of hours were stated and work was being done under cover. The majority of men wishing to work in England will visit as many representatives as possible and obtain from each one details of wages etc., and then select the best offer. I have known men collect as many as eight preference slips before deciding which job he will accept. I have had no difficulties whatever in obtaining men for Trent Navigation and Grand Union Canal Company where good wages could be earned.

I returned to England just before Christmas 1942 and discovered that the boatmen sent to Canal Transport Ltd. were not settling down very well. They informed our Traffic Super- intendent that they had been promised £7 and £8 per week and that they would all be working on motor boats. During my short stay I saw practically all the men sent over and they agreed to give the job a trial. Unfortunately it was dark weather and the earnings did not amount to more than the guaranteed minimum in the majority of cases, and this was evidently not sufficient inducement with the result that several of them applied for release on various grounds.

I returned to Eire in January 1943 to recruit the remainder of the men required by the Industry and during my stay I visited most of the places in Southern Eire where water minded men were to be found. I also visited Northern Ireland and spent quite a time contacting organizations such as Transport & General Workers' Union, Local Labour Exchanges, Barge Owners, and also Dock Yards, but found that unemployment of men suitable for canal work was negligible. During my investigations in Eire I contacted the Traffic Superintendent of Messrs. Guinesses, but I only obtained one man who had been a captain on Messrs. Guinesses barges for 15 years, and I understand that this man was not very satisfactory on arrival here. In February I reported that boat builders and ships' platers were very scarce and the only men available for boat repairing were rough carpenters with varying experience of repair work in Dock Yards both in Southern and Northern Ireland. I also reported that some of the conditions layed down by certain firms were very searching and would prohibit me from fulfilling their requirements. I also drew attention to the low rates of pay which were being offered in a number of cases.

Towards the end of February certain firms began to cancel requirements for labour for various reasons. In some cases the men sent were not suitable, in others no billets were available, therefore I

had to cancel the sailings of a number of men as I was not in a position to transfer them all to other firms in the Industry. A number of the men had been waiting to travel for several weeks and I had no option but to transfer them to other representatives or release them from their contracts.

Early in March, 1943 word began to come through to Eire from men already employed as boatmen in England that the jobs were no good and that the wages and conditions were very poor. I received a number of complaints from the Birmingham district that men had to travel several miles by bus to work and that no canteens were available for obtaining a hot meal during the days work. I had visits from the mens' wives informing me that their husbands were sending home not more than thirty shillings a week, while Mrs. O'Riley's husband who was also working in Birmingham in a factory was sending home three and four pounds per week. All this did not tend to make the recruitment of labour any easier and the number of men failing to travel increased, until I held at one period in April, 53 Travel Permits belonging to men who did not take up the job offered, and for which they had signed agreements. Although we pay for the permits we cannot legally hold them, as they are the property of the men whose names appear on same. A number of men have paid the cost in order to recover their Permits quickly, and when I have transferred men to other representatives I have collected from them the cost of the Permits, five shillings for the medical examination and three shillings for the cost of photographs.

Meetings of all representatives were held from time to time under the chairmanship of Mr. Toms and we discussed all our troubles and tried to iron out some of the hundred and one difficulties with which we had to contend. In March it was decided by Mr. Toms to zone all Southern Ireland and give each representative a specified district in which to recruit. Even so there were a number of representatives working the same ground. I was given Dublin and an area extending 40 miles on account of the Canal system terminating in Dublin, and also owing to the largest repair docks being situated there. I was also given permission to recruit skilled workers only from any part of the Free State, and as I was still recruiting on the Individual offer system it meant me making long journeys if I heard of any skilled men in the South West or North whom I thought would be suitable for a particular job. If there was only one man involved I preferred to pay his fare to Dublin for interview, rather than go to the expense of travelling myself.

Early in May the system of recruiting by individual offer was withdrawn as the number of direct offers had grown to such an extent from all sources that the Department of Industry and Commerce came to the conclusion that the privilege was being abused. Every representative was instructed that interviews must take place at Labour Exchanges only. I had to reorganize my method of recruitment and issue reference slips and then await the call to the Labour Exchange, when I arranged a date convenient to the officials and myself. I adopted the practice of having a doctor in attendance, firstly I interviewed the men, and secondly the men were sent by me for a medical examination with a slip stating the nature of the work they would be expected to do. If they were certified fit I completed a contract, if not, they were rejected. This method overcame the possibility of having men rejected on the night before they sailed to England, as previously I had all men examined the night before sailing, and it was usually about 11 p.m. before I could get them into the Hotel. The drawback to the examination at the Labour Exchange is that from four to six weeks can elapse before a man sails and he can, during that time, contract all kinds of diseases etc. From the first of November an entirely new system has been put into operation, and I enclose details of the arrangements made for medical examinations, Hotel accommodation and transport etc., also copies of circulars I have sent out from time to time in an endeavour to keep contact with the men. I also enclose luggage label, and disc which the men are instructed to wear in order that the work of all Ministry of Labour officials at destination may be made a little easier.

I have interviewed at least 800 men during my visits to Eire, of these approximately 200 men were turned down by me, and of the remaining 600 men approximately 400 men agreed to accept my offer of work. The total number of men who have left Eire for employment in this Country is 190 men to Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1943. We have on hand in Dublin approximately 68 Travel Permits belonging to

men who have failed to travel. We have also 16 Travel Permits lodged with the United Kingdom Permit Office awaiting a decision as to the granting of a visa.

In addition we have registered at the Labour Exchange another 40 men and our demands at the moment are as follows:-

John Harker, Knottingley.	3 Ships' Platers	(2 men have been engaged).
Sheffield & South York. Nav.	2 Lock Keepers	(Not available owing to low wages).
	1 Lock Keeper/Labourer	(Engaged).
	3 Maintenance Labourers	(Engaged).
	1 Goods Porter.	(Engaged).
James Mayor & Co. Wigan.	1 Boat Repairer.	(Engaged).
Rathbone Bros.	2 Boat Repairers.	(Engaged)
T. & S. Element.	2 Boat Repairers.	(Engaged)
K. Turton.	1 Wharfman.	(Engaged)
Sharpness Docks Co.	2 Ships' platers.	(Not available owing to low wages).
	4 Maintenance Labourers.	(Difficulty in signing these men owing to low wages).
Wm. Izard.	1 Farrier/Blacksmith.	(I am in communication with this firm re this man)
Severn Commission.	2 Crane Drivers.	(1 Crane Driver engaged).
	4 Dredgemen.	(4 Dredgemen engaged).
Kempson & Co.	2 Boatmen.	(2 men registered).
Grand Union Canal Co.	1 Bricklayer.	(Dublin rate 2/2½d. per hr. Gloucester rate 1/7¾d. per hr.)
Fellows, Morton & Clayton.	1 Fitter/Turner.	
S. Barlow Coal Company.	1 Turner/Fitter.	(1 man registered).
Gilbert Bros.	1 Turner/Fitter.	(1 man registered).
Nene Catchment Board.	2 Turner/Fitter.	(2 men registered).
L.M.S. Rly, Trent & Mersey	1 Cub Crane Driver.	(Awaiting Details).

I should be able to fill the majority of these vacancies from the men with whom I am in contact.

I am personally disappointed with the result and would like to state that in my opinion the question of wages and conditions are mainly responsible for the number of men who have failed to travel, and also of the men who did arrive and were not satisfactory. This especially applies to boatmen as I am sure that the majority of the men sent were capable of doing the job. A Number of the men who have arrived here have joined some branch of the services and others have been transferred to other work. The Great Western Railway required 400 labourers and their Representative informed me that he would guarantee them at least 60 hours per week and up to 80 hours if the men would work. I have had several interviews with the Representative of British Shipbuilders and he has had similar experiences as my own with regard to shipwrights and other skilled labour.

I am of the opinion that the best types of men have left Eire for this country, there are still a few good men but these are in the minority and difficult to locate. We are having to recruit mainly men who have previously been to work in England during the last 3½ years and they are fully alive to all the circumstances on this side, there are very few of the men on whom you can rely, and I have had numerous experiences where men have let me down on the day they should have sailed, after turning up the night before for a medical examination and promising faithfully to travel.

With regard to the selection of skilled men I have a very good knowledge of Engineering and also am conversant with the Building and Repairing of craft. I know and can drive all types of cranes,

steam or electrical, and on many occasions I have sent men across who had a good knowledge of and experience in repairing of craft, and they have proved a failure. On the other hand I have sent men of rather doubtful qualifications, and they have proved very good men indeed. A great deal depends on the way the men are handled on arrival here, and once you get an Irishman really upset he will never be satisfied until he has moved on to another job.

I trust that the report will give you all the information you require.

Should there be any special point you wish expanding please let me know.

The enclosures will give you an idea of the efforts I have made to keep contact with the men and also make their journeys as easy as possible.

You will see from the enclosures the position regarding medical examinations, one by the Eire Government and one by our own Doctor, both give a certificate. I enclose copy of the letter sent to our Doctor regarding the medical standards. All representatives are now using the same contract form, and the whole system of recruiting is now being standardised as far as possible.

It will be necessary for me to pay occasional visits to Eire to straighten out a few difficulties and speed up the machinery, but these visits need only be of brief duration, unless we have further demands from the Industry.

Ben. Earle. Walls,

November 18th, 1943.

IRISH LABOUR SUPPLIED TO VARIOUS FIRMS OF THE INDUSTRY.

TOTAL.

NORTH EASTERN REGION. 35 men required.

Aire & Calder Navigation, Leeds & Goole	3. Maintenance Labourers.	
	2. Warehouse Porters.	5.
Calder Carrying Co. Halifax.	3. Boatmen.	
	3. Boat Repairers	6.
John Harker Ltd., Knottingley	1. Shipsmith.	
	2. Marine Fitters.	
	1. Ships' Plater.	4.
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Leeds Industrial Co-op., Leeds	1. Labourer.	
Sheffield & South Yorkshire Nav'n Co.	5. Maintenance Labourers.	
	1. Boat Repairer.	
	7. Goods Porters.	13.
Calder & Hebble Nav'n., Halifax.	4. Dredger hands	
	2. Carpenters.	6.

SOUTH WESTERN REGION. 18 men required.

John Harker Ltd., Gloucester.	3. Labourers.	
	1. Ships' Plater.	4.
Severn Commission., Gloucester.	6. Dredger hands.	
	2. Steam Crane Drivers.	8.
Sharpness Dock Co., Gloucester.	6. Labourers.	6.

NORTH MIDLAND REGION. 24 men required.

Trent Navigation & Trent Carriers Ltd., Nottingham.	6. Bank Rangers.	
	18. Goods Porters.	

METROPOLITAN REGION. 21 men required.

Lee Conservancy Board, Middlesex.	2. Barge Captains.	2.
Grand Union Canal Co., Islington, Brentford & Southall.	19. Dock & General Labourers.	19.
NORTH WESTERN REGION. 44 men required		
Canal Transport Ltd., Liverpool.	15. Boatmen.	
	7. Warehouse Porters.	22.
F. J. Abbott Ltd., Salford.	3. Boatmen.	
Leeds & Liverpool Canal Co, Liverpool.	3. Carpenters.	
	1. Blacksmith.	
	3. Dredger hands.	7.
Manchester Ship Canal Co., Manchester.	3. Maintenance Labourers.	3.
T. & J. Hodgson, Blackburn.	2. Boat Repairers.	2.
Rathbone Bros, Manchester.	4. Boat Repairers.?	4.
James Mayor & Co. Ltd., Wigan.	3. Boat Repairers.	3.
MIDLAND REGION. 44 men required.		
J. Toole Ltd., Bilston	6. Boatmen.	
	4. Boat Repairers.	10.
E. Thomas, Walsall.	7. Boat Repairers.	
	8. Boatmen.	15.
L. M. & S. Railway, Wolverhampton.	1. Boatman	1.
Worsey Ltd., Walsall.	1. Boat Repairer.	1.
T. & S. Element Ltd., Birmingham.	4. Boatmen.	
	2. Boat Repairers.	6.
Thos. Bantock & Co.	1. Boatman.	1.
	2. Canal Porters.	3.
Fellows, Morton & Clayton, Birmingham.	2. Boat Repairers.	2.
Spencer Abbott & Co., Birmingham.	2. Boat Repairers.	2.
H. Hingley & Sons., Dudley.	2. Boatmen.	2.
King Bros Ltd., Birmingham.	1. Boatman.	1.
L. Leigh Ltd., Birmingham.	6. Boatmen.	6.
<b>Total</b>		<b>191</b>

The North Western Regional Canal Committee

Irish Labour 9<sup>th</sup> December 1943

1. Nos of men posted to employment.
2. Nos of men still remaining in that employment.
3. Nos of men leaving employment with permission from NSO.
4. Nos of men leaving employment without consent of employer or permission from NSO.
5. Of the No.3 transferred to other work in this country.
6. Of the No.3 returned to Eire.
7. Returned to Eire of own accord (one no trace)

<i>Firm</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Rathbone Bros.	Shipwrights	4	3	1	-	-	1	-
T & J Hodson, B'burn	Carpenters	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Canal Transport Ltd	Boatmen	17	2	9	6	5	4	6
	Porters	7	2	2	3	2	-	3

MSC Co, Bridgewater	Maintenance Labr'rs	2	-	2	-	2	-	-
James Mayor & Co	Carpenters	3	-	3	-	3	-	-
L&LC Co	Carpenters	3	2	1	-	1	-	-
	Dredgemen	2	-	-	2	-	-	2
	Blacksmith	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
	Fireman (dredger)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Simpson, Davies & Sons	Shipwright	1	<i>did not arrive</i>					
F J Abbott Ltd	Boatmen	3	1	2	-	2	-	-

#### SUMMARY

Shipwrights	4	3	1	-	-	1	-
Carpenters	8	4	4	-	4	-	-
Boatmen	20	3	11	6	7	4	6
Porters	7	2	2	3	2	-	3
Maintenance Lab.	5	1	2	2	2	-	2
Blacksmith	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
	45	14	20	11	15	5	11

#### RECRUITMENT OF MEN FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

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| 1. No of men originally asked for.     | 2. No. Posted                                    |
| 3. No remaining at 1-12-1943.          | 4. No departed with consent from NSO.            |
| 5. No departed without consent of NSO. | 6. No transferred to other work in this country. |
| 7. No returned to Ireland.             | 8. No whose whereabouts are unknown.             |
| 9. No of vacancies still existing.     |  |

<i>Employer</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
Bantock, T & Co	Boatmen	2	2	-	2	-	1	-	1	-
<i>do</i>	Porters	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Barlow, S Coal Co Ltd	Boatmen	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Chambers, S T & Son Ltd	Boatmen	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Element, T & S Ltd	Boatmen	20	4	-	4	-	2	2	-	20
<i>do</i>	Boatbuilders	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	6
FM&C Ltd	Boatbuilders	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	4
Hingley, N & Sons Ltd	Boatmen	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Key, P & Son	Boatbuilders	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	7
King Bros	Boatmen	3	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
<i>do</i>	Wharfman	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Leigh, L Ltd	Boatmen	12	6	-	6	-	-	-	6	6
LMS Wolverhampton	Boatmen	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Smith, F	Wharfman	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spencer, Abbott & Co Ltd	Boatbuilders	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Toole, J Ltd	Boatmen	6	6	-	6	-	4	-	2	8
<i>do</i>	Boatbuilders	4	4	1	3	-	-	-	3	4
Thomas, E	Boatmen	8	7	4	2	1	-	-	3	7
<i>do</i>	Boatbuilders	6	6	4	2	-	1	-	1	6
Turton, K	Wharfman	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Wall, J M Ltd	Boatmen	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Worsey Ltd	Boatbuilders	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wulfruna Coal Co	Boatmen	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
<i>do</i>	Wharfman	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Boatmen	81	26	4	21	1	7	2	13	61
	Boatbuilders	23	16	11	5	-	1	-	4	36
	Wharfmen	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
	Porters	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-

Totals 110 43 15 27 1 8 2 18 104

Note: In addition there are 25 firms in the West Midlands Region who have notified staff vacancies but who have been unwilling to apply for Irish Labour.

Main reasons for men leaving the Industry.

Although the men were recruited as Boatmen and the condition of boating in this country explained by the Recruiting Officer, the actual character of the work does not appear to have been fully appreciated in all cases either as regards craft confined to narrow waterways through flights of locks or that in many cases they were horse-drawn. In other cases the men seem to have deliberately misrepresented their experience. No doubt some of them followed a policy of make-believe in order

Grade and number posted	Numbers remaining	Numbers who have left		Of those who left with permission	
		with permission of N.S.O.	without permission	Transferred to other work in this country	Returned to Eire
43 maintenance labourers	28	11	4	10	-
2 engine drivers	1	1	-	-	1
10 dredgemen	4	3	3	1	1
3 shipyard labourers	1	-	2	-	2
49 boatmen	9	32	8	14	6
16 boatbuilders	11	5	-	1	-
41 goods porters	22	13	6	7	-
4 shipwrights	3	1	-	-	-
14 carpenters	10	4	-	4	-
1 blacksmith	1	-	-	-	-
2 tugmen	-	2	-	-	-
2 marine fitters	-	2	-	2	-
2 ships platers	2	-	-	-	-
1 ships smith	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Total 190</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>

to change to the most lucrative work to be obtained after arriving in this country.

The North-Western Regional Canal Committee

W.J.Shea, Esq., Ministry of War Transport,  
Mayfair Court, Stratton Street, LONDON.W.1.

9th December, 1943.

Dear Sir,

IRISH LABOUR.

In response to your letter dated 24th ultimo. I attach particulars giving the answers to your queries as to the number of men arriving in this region from Eire and what has subsequently transpired, so far as they are concerned.

The Position can be briefly analysed as under:-

Number of men arriving	45
Number of men remaining	14
Number of men left	31

15 to other work, 5 returned to Eire (with permission of the N.S.O.), 10 returned to Eire for holiday or health reasons and did not return. 1 no trace.

The reason for the men leaving on the canals can be summed follows:-

Shipwrights and carpenters for boatyards. - The men sent over were inexperienced and shewed no interest in the work. Rathbone Bros. say the 3 men still in their employ are hopeless and they have applied to the N.S.O. for their release.

Canal boatmen, Canal porters, Canal Maintenance Staff: These men were generally either dissatisfied with the conditions and terms of employment or unsuitable for the work for which they had been sent over.

I trust the information I have given meets your requirements.

Yours faithfully, Norman N Bird, Liason Officer and Secretary

Canal Control  
Labour Supply Committee  
Irish Labour

The following is a summary of a report [see above] to the Director of Canals by Mr. B. E. Walls on his activities as Canal and Inland Waterway Representative for the recruitment of Irish labour. The report is dated 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1943.

Mr. Walls first visited Eire in October, 1942, with the limited object of recruiting boatmen and maintenance men for two undertakings, viz. Canal Transport Ltd. and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co. Owing to the Eire Government programme for building 20 barges for the carriage of peat by canal, recruitment of boatmen in the Dublin area seemed likely to be difficult, but some 60 men were interviewed and offers of employment were made to cover the requirements of the two undertakings. By the end of December, 1942, some 20 men had arrived and were at work in this country.

Mr. Walls had formed the opinion that a number of men were available for recruitment who would be prepared to accept work in England provided wages and conditions were satisfactory and it was decided to extend recruiting to the whole of the industry, including-boat building and repairing. Mr. Walls therefore returned to Eire in December, 1942, to commence recruitment of the larger numbers of men known to be required. In his search for suitable men to fill the vacancies it was necessary for him to visit many places in Eire and in Northern. Ireland.

Numerous likely men were interviewed, but competition amongst the representatives of many industries was intense and numbers of men experienced in inland waterway work chose to accept employment in other industries in order to have the advantages in pay and conditions offered by

those industries. A considerable number of men in various grades were engaged, however, and the necessary steps taken to secure permission for them to leave Eire.

Early in March, 1943, word began to reach Eire from men already employed as boatmen in England that the jobs were 'no good' and that wages and conditions were poor. Complaints were received from the Birmingham district that men had to travel several miles by bus to work and that no canteens were available for obtaining a hot meal during the day. Wives of some of the men visited the Recruiting Office in Dublin and complained that their husbands were sending home only 30/- a week, whereas other men employed in other industries in the same area were sending about £3 a week or more. About this time certain of the canal employers cancelled their demands for Irish labour for various reasons and a number of men were prevented from sailing owing to lack of billeting accommodation in this country. All this tended to add to the difficulties of recruitment and an increasing number of men foiled to sail after having signed engagement forms.

Until May, 1943, Mr. Walls had been allowed to recruit skilled workers in any part of the Free State, an individual offer of employment being made to each man. This entailed much trouble and travelling, but owing to the comparatively small but specialised requirements of the Canal Industry it would have been the most satisfactory method but for the fact that other representatives could offer more attractive wages and conditions. The system of recruiting by individual offer was at this time withdrawn and all representatives were compelled to interview possible recruits only at a Labour Exchange and within a limited area of recruitment. The area allowed to Canals was within a radius of 40 miles of Dublin, but the territory was shared with other industries.

The period between the signing of a man at a Labour Exchange and the date of sailing for this country is usually about two months, but where a man has previously been employed in England the waiting period is invariably longer as enquiries are made into the reasons for the man leaving his previous employment. Many men in this category are refused permission, to sail.

The recruit is medically examined before being allowed to embark and Mr. Walls took the precaution of having applicants medically examined before they signed engagement forms.

Up to 31st October, 1943, Mr. Walls had interviewed some 800 men. Of these he rejected 200 and of the remaining 600 approximately 400 agreed to accept the work offered. The total number of men who had left Eire for canal employment at that date was 190 and the number of vacancies still outstanding was 38.

Mr. Walls expressed disappointment by the results achieved. In his opinion the comparatively poor wages and conditions are mainly responsible for the failure of recruits to travel and for the dissatisfaction of many who did take up the work offered, insufficient overtime being a prime cause. He records that the best types of men have left Eire, the few good men remaining being difficult to locate and recruit.

Addendum to Mr. B. E. Walls' Report by Ministry of War Transport

In order that the results of the recruiting campaign in Eire might be assessed, Regional Canal Committees were asked to furnish details of the numbers of men remaining in the employment for which they were brought over and a statement showing the information obtained is appended.

The Regional Canal Committees were also asked to state the main reasons for the men leaving Canal employment and any other information bearing on the question.

The replies are summarized as follows:-

South Western Region. Men posted were generally satisfactory workmen. They appeared, however, to come to this country with the object of accumulating a little capital and then to return to Eire. Some became dissatisfied on hearing of the higher rates of wages paid in other industries.

West Midland Region. The men recruited as boatmen did not appear to appreciate the actual character of the duties they would be called upon to perform, i.e. to control horse-drawn craft operating on narrow waterways through flights of locks. Some misrepresented their experience with a view to gaining entry into the country for the purpose of seeking more lucrative employment.

North-Western Region. The men were generally inexperienced and quickly became dissatisfied with the conditions and terms of employment.

North Eastern Region. Those who left were attracted by the higher rates of pay offered by other industries. The boatmen expected to become captains within a few months but were not inclined to accept the responsibilities of such posts. This confirms the opinion held by the Committee of this Region that it takes years of experience before a man can manage craft which work frequently in tidal waters.

East Midland Region. Complaints were received of the heaviness of the work.

London Region. Men dissatisfied with financial arrangements.

Ministry of War Transport.

26<sup>th</sup> January, 1944.