

FUEL CRISIS

The pitheads were ice-bound. In the North Midlands and ~~the~~ Yorkshire coalfields thousands of trucks stood loaded but could not be moved. Industry was idle for lack of this very coal. That was the ironic and all but disastrous position in the first days of the crisis-shut-down. To the letter was justified the warning that miners' leader Arthur Horner gave to the T.U.C. and Government last autumn. As he predicted industry was brought to a standstill.

Thousands of factories stopped producing the goods that buy our food abroad. But British ingenuity, wherever possible, served us well. A London fairground, for example, lent its generating plant to a nearby works, ran a cable into the shops and the machinery ran again.

Bicycles pedalled by relays of workers improvised power in scores of work places.

A motor lawn-mower interrupted its winter rest in one factory visited by Paramount film reporters.

d a spell off to avoid an At another place
an autocycle ~~was keeping the lathes turning.~~ *kept to lather*

~~Meanwhile the largest factory can~~

Meanwhile the largest candle manufacturing company in England rose to the occasion. Melted paraffin wax was poured into moulds and by thoroughly modern methods one of the oldest industries in the country was in full swing. When the wax cools it is forced through cutters and the residue scraped off. Of course, only a fraction of the sudden, enormous demand could be supplied. ~~By~~ another ingenious process the wick is drawn through. It was a brave effort to help the country in its temporary plight, on the candle standard.)

By

x

x
x

(~~official~~) / By this time hundreds of firms had arrears of work to catch up, hence the large models, specially for folks working overtime.

Thus, hotels and restaurants were able to fall back on candle light. Outside the domestic hours there was no electricity for anything but essentials. Barbers did the best they could in the circumstances. It's too bad if lots of men don't like the look of their back hair for the next week or two.

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The big Hoover factory at least kept its clerical staff at work, by the aid of goodwill and thick clothing. With hurricane lamps, ~~and candles~~ and candles flickering a few inches from typewriters, the administration end of the business kept on the move. More goodwill kept the

(- good light, Individual enterprise provided heat, drawing/at work, though in the ordinary way the best light is considered essential 4 7 job, cl 2 TS 1 st.

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Typists with no work to do for the time being gave offices a coat of paint, they've been wanting for some time. Manpower in the full sense of the word was seen in a workshop where a handle was fixed on the flywheel, and ~~willing muscles~~ *elbow press* did the rest.

The cycling habit was catching on everywhere. At a factory in Slough it enabled work to proceed on armature winding.

*Individual enterprise provided heat & light -
- side essential 4 7 job, cl 2 TS 1 st
good light -*

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Crisis of another kind was dealt with at Fairford Aerodrome where the R.A.F. flew help to the isolated Staffordshire village of Butterton. In this operation, in almost impossible flying conditions one of the Halifax bombers crashed in flames. Eight men, including two Press photographers, were killed. But not before food had been dropped to the marooned people. By the same methods that supplied the men of Arnhem, Butterton was saved from near-starvation.

The pilot radioed the airfield that it would be suicidal for the rest of the squadron to take off, but before returning himself he bravely took a tremendous risk and dropped the parachute containers on the arranged field.

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From the Northern coalfields help came at last. Given a picture-postcard beauty by the same snow that immobilized coal by the hundred-thousand tons, the pitheads were eased from the worst grip of weather. Coal trains were on the move, empty waggons took their place at the mines. The vital traffic, life-blood of England, was flowing again.

Into London sixty trains brought 30,000 tons on the first day the supply was resumed. The great Cricklewood ~~coal~~ marshalling yard ^{full of up} for the north side of the capital filled up. ~~Optimistic expectations that road transport would have been improvised and waiting were not fulfilled, but at least here was the coal and complete~~ ~~filled up.~~ Here was the coal and the complete electricity-breakdown was averted. By the skin of our teeth and the luck of the weather we had gained a breathing space. We may not have such luck again.