

HOMWORK HELPSHEET / REVISION FILE

BACKGROUND

In 1914 Scotland's main industries were ship building, engineering, coal, iron and steel and textiles. Glasgow and the Clydeside area was the main industrial center although there were important industries such as Jute production in Dundee and the rubber works in Edinburgh. Coal mining was long established in Fife, Ayrshire and the Lothians. Clydeside was almost perfect for shipbuilding. There were coalmines and iron-works nearby to supply the materials to make the ships. Engineering was an important industry with many skilled workers. The river Clyde was wide and deep enough to launch very large ships. By 1914 over 25% of the world's ships were made in a Clyde shipyard.

When war broke out in 1914 Clydeside was vital to the production of war supplies and munitions. Scottish shipyards had full order books building both warships and merchant vessels. New munitions factories were set up by the government. Steel mills were producing twice as much as before the war. The rubber company in Edinburgh was working 24 hours a day. Dundee jute mills were working full out. Coal mines and railways made big profits. Thousands of people flooded into Glasgow to work in the war industries and unemployment in Scotland almost disappeared.

- Although Scotland seemed to be a world leader in shipbuilding and engineering other countries were catching up fast and developing new technologies such as diesel engines and welding. Scottish shipyards still relied on steamships and metal riveting. The boom years of the war put off the need to modernize but this did not last for long.
- In the years after the Great War Scottish industry faced hard times. Shipbuilding, coal, iron and steel and textiles had been in decline since markets were lost during World War I. Other countries could produce these things more cheaply. Scottish industry was old fashioned and could not compete with foreign producers.
- **Shipbuilding** was the most important industry in Scotland and thousands of jobs depended on it. Many shipyards had to close because of foreign competition. Government spending on ships for the navy was cut to save money. Jobs were also lost in all of the industries that provided materials for the shipyards – iron, steel and coal as well as in companies that helped to fit out ships with carpets/furniture/pottery/cutlery etc.
- **The coal industry** lost markets to foreign competitors during the war. Coalmining declined because other countries could produce coal more efficiently. New sources of energy such as electricity and oil meant less demand for coal. Mines were badly equipped and the owners did not invest in new machinery etc. The decline of shipbuilding and other industries meant less coal was needed to make iron and steel. About 70% of Scottish coal mines were losing money.
- **The iron and steel industry** was hit hard by the decline in shipbuilding and the loss of markets during World War 1. Countries like America, Japan and Germany could produce iron and steel more cheaply than Scotland.
- **Textiles** suffered because of cheap cotton from Japan, America and India. Synthetic materials such as rayon and nylon also reduced the demand for cotton cloth.
- In the 1920s unemployment was highest in areas where shipbuilding was concentrated. Whole communities suffered shops and businesses closed making unemployment even worse. The skills of Scottish workers did not match the new growth industries such as chemicals, electronics and automobiles and the old factories were not suitable for light industry.
- Throughout the 1920s and during the depression of the 1930s Scotland suffered badly from high unemployment. Recovery only came in the late 1930s when rearmament began.