

## SOURCE 4

Extract from a report produced by the Mines Department, November 1916

(PRO ref: POWE 16/176)

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SOURCE 4A

SOURCE 4B

### HOW TO USE THIS SOURCE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE BIG QUESTION :

Look carefully at this source and consider what it tells you about how workers were affected by the war and how they contributed to the war effort. You should consider:

#### ASK YOURSELF:

- What was the government's priority for the coal industry?
- Why was the enlistment (volunteering for the Army) of miners a problem?
- What was the problem of absenteeism?
- How bad was it?
- What does this document suggest about relations between miners and mine owners?
- Does this extract provide evidence that miners did not care about the war effort?
- In 1925 the government was planning to throw away the document which this extract comes from. Why is it a good job they did not?

# SOURCE 4A

## REGULATION OF THE COAL SUPPLY

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### I. General view of the problem.

(a) Production - The first problem was that of maintaining production with as little diminution as possible under war conditions. Difficulties arose primarily from the enlistment of coal miners which was only in part compensated by the influx into the industry.

A third point on which difficulty was anticipated is absenteeism. Owing to the arduous character of their labour miners do not work six full days in the week. There are regular "idle days", and in addition to these many miners absent themselves from work at irregular times. Part of the absenteeism, which before the war amounted to between 10 and 11% of the working days of the miners employed, is due to unavoidable causes such as accident or sickness.

## SOURCE 4B

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Absenteeism generally tends to increase when wages rise, miners taking the benefit in the form of a curtailment of work, and early in the war we found the view frequently expressed by coal owners that this would occur so that the consequence of increased wages would be a further reduction of output.

This apprehension, however, has not been borne out by the event. Appeals to the patriotism of miners have counteracted the tendency and though there is still a regrettable amount of absenteeism, there is nevertheless a reduction amounting to almost 20% in the amount of absenteeism which may be taken to be avoidable.

As the broad result, notwithstanding the curtailment of producing power by recruitment and the increased demands of the war services and of our allies there has at no time been a breakdown in the supply of coal, nor have famine prices ever obtained. There have been difficulties and apprehensions of shortage and prices have ruled high but in no case has there been eventual failure to supply coal.