

APPRENTICES.

This question has been dealt with during the year by a conference of representatives of employers and workers throughout the Dominion, and of the Departments of Education and Labour, with the result that a Bill was passed which came into force on the 1st April. The reports in connection therewith have already been published, entitled "Apprenticeship Question (N.Z.), 1923."

The main features of the Act are those providing machinery by which an Apprenticeship Committee in each trade or branch of the trade in each centre may be set up. The duty of this committee will be to watch the progress of the apprentices in that trade and locality, and to see that they diligently learn and are properly taught.

It is considered that these committees will in practice become the "backbone" of the Act, as they may be given full power in their respective trades and localities to administer the Act for themselves, with the Court of Arbitration (under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act), however, as the general controlling authority and Court of appeal. The success of the Act will no doubt largely depend upon the appointment of suitable men who will look to the ultimate interests of their trades, and to the public welfare generally.

As a means of remedying the shortage of skilled labour where it may be found to exist, the Court of Arbitration is empowered to order the employment of a minimum number of apprentices where it is satisfied that it is necessary so to do in order to provide an adequate supply of journeymen for the future. The following table is of interest in this connection as showing the trades in which considerably more apprentices could be employed without exceeding the maximum proportion fixed in the respective awards and industrial agreements. In Queensland the Court of Arbitration has, under similar powers to those in the New Zealand Act, fixed the proportion of apprentices in the building trade at a maximum of one to two journeymen, and a minimum of one to five. This minimum proportion is a somewhat low one, as at most it would, assuming the apprenticeship period to be four years, provide for the replacement of each journeyman only once in every twenty years, which period would be considerably extended if allowance is made for the number of boys who usually drift away from the occupations taken up. The information respecting New Zealand is being submitted to the Court of Arbitration and to the Apprenticeship Committees (where these have been formed), so that they may consider whether the number should be increased by an order under section 5 (4) (a).

RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES EMPLOYED IN THE SKILLED TRADES, TOGETHER WITH THE ADDITIONAL NUMBER OF APPRENTICES ALLOWABLE WITHOUT EXCEEDING THE MAXIMUM FIXED IN THE RESPECTIVE AWARDS AND INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENTS.

Trade.	Number of Journeymen and Working Employers for whom Apprentices are allowable.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Equivalent to One in Number stated below.	Maximum Proportion fixed by Award or Agreement.*	Additional Number of Apprentices allowed.
Baking and pastrycooking ..	1,137	201	5.6	3 to 5	463
Boilermaking	195	69	2.8	1 to 2	50
Bootmaking	1,066	248	4.3	1 to 3	185
Boot-repairing	675	86	7.8	1 to 3	292
Bricklaying	302	70	4.3	1 to 3	72
Carpentering and joinery ..	3,993	882	4.5	1 to 3	746
Cabinetmaking and furniture making	1,635	631	2.6	1 to 2	237
Coopering	133	5	26.6	1 to 3	47
Coachbuilding	664	256	2.6	1 to 2	146
Cycle-working	231	118	1.9	1 to 1	209
Electrical working	691	506	1.4	1 to 1	180
Engineering	2,036	925	2.2	2 to 1	2,847
Gardening	210	29	7.2	1 to 3	64
Horse-shoeing	446	72	6.1	1 to each fire	143
Jewellery and watchmaking ..	366	123	2.9	1 to 3	77
Letterpress, lithographing, book-binding	1,286	473	2.7	2 to 3	224
Masonry (stone and monumental)	208	34	6.1	1 to 3	43
Motor mechanics	1,198	659	1.8	1 to 1	540
Moulding	458	157	2.9	1 to 2	102
Painting	802	149	5.4	1 to 3	199
Plastering	356	98	3.6	1 to 3	88
Plumbing and gasfitting ..	1,035	468	2.2	1 to 2	190
Saddlery	379	67	5.6	1 to 3	187
Ship, yacht, and boat building ..	142	36	3.9	1 to 3	27
Tailoring	1,019	81	12.5	1 to 4	330
Tinsmithing	444	158	2.8	1 to 2	97
Typographical	805	228	3.5	1 to 3	216
Wickerworking	174	72	2.4	1 to 2	21
Totals	22,086	6,901	3.2	..	8,022

* In localities where no maximum proportion is fixed the usual proportion is taken for the industry.