

An attempt has been made to obtain reports on all the boys leaving the schools in the principal centres for the purpose of entering employment, in order to ascertain the number that take up (a) the skilled labour callings (viz., the primary and secondary industries on which the people depend for the supply of the necessities of life), (b) the commercial and professional occupations, or (c) unskilled or "blind-alley" trades.

The data are unfortunately not sufficiently complete to furnish definite information, and arrangements are in train for fuller particulars being obtained from the schools at the end of this year. An interesting example has, however, been given at one school, which shows that 69 per cent. of the boys leaving that school last year wished to take up commercial and professional occupations, 22 per cent. industrial, 4 per cent. agricultural, and 5 per cent. transport and other miscellaneous work.

A comparison of the above with the last available return showing the occupations of the people (census of 1921) shows that out of a total male working population of 391,263 only 88,322 (slightly over 22 per cent.) were engaged in the commercial and professional occupations (while, as above shown, 69 per cent. of the boys from the school mentioned desired to take up these occupations); and 241,349 (about 62 per cent.) were employed in the primary and secondary industries, while only 31 per cent. of the boys referred to wished to enter these occupations; the remainder were engaged in transport and communication and domestic work.

If the figures shown from the school referred to are typical of the rest of the schools, it can readily be seen that the wishes of the boys lie, to a very large extent, in the directions in which they are not likely to be required, while the important primary and secondary industries, which now employ nearly two-thirds of the male working population, would receive only 31 per cent. of the boys. This information supports the conclusion of the Committee in its report that the education system has in the past given the boys a bias in favour of the commercial and professional occupations to the detriment of the Dominion's industries, and that the question of an alteration to the system should be considered. In the meantime various steps are being proposed to point out to the boys and their parents, also the teachers, the importance of the primary and secondary industries, in order to direct the boys into the right channels, where the best prospects of employment are likely to occur, and so that there may be a maximum number of producers and a minimum number of non-producers.

Following on your instructions, I have visited the principal towns of the Dominion for the purpose of explaining the Act to employers, workers, parents, boys, and others interested, and in particular to urge on employers and workers the setting-up of Apprenticeship Committees in their respective trades. A number of committees have already been set up, mostly in the building trade (in which there is the greatest shortage of skilled labour) and others are in process of formation.

LEAD POISONING IN THE PAINTING INDUSTRY.

This difficult question has again been under discussion abroad, and there continues to be great diversity of opinion amongst experts on the subject. In the meantime an investigation has been continued in New Zealand of certain substitutes for white-lead as a basis for paints. A test was made by arrangement with the Railway Department of a compound known as "zinox"—that is, hydrated oxide of zinc. It is considered that the tests were not sufficient, as they were made under somewhat restricted conditions. A further test has therefore been arranged with the Railway Department—to paint two new cottages adjoining each other, so as to be subject to the same weather conditions, one with zinox and the other with white-lead, the same colouring to be used in certain parts of both. A more conclusive test, and a report on the condition of the paint-work, will then be ready at the end of twelve months' test—which will cover the four seasons of the year.

Another base for paint, known as "normal sulphate of lead," is now being manufactured in Auckland (a local patent). We have arranged with the Railway Department for a test to be made with normal sulphate of lead, similar to that now being made with zinox.

A compilation of present knowledge of lead poisoning was issued in August last by the Provincial Board of Health of Ontario. The compilation presents the facts known concerning the causes, incidence, recognition, prevention, and treatment of lead poisoning. It is stated that it can be taken as axiomatic that the chief danger in painting, so far as lead poisoning is concerned, is from inhalation of lead-dust. Prevention must accordingly lie along one of two lines—either (1) substitution of some other pigment for lead, or (2) concentration on the problem of (a) dust-prevention, and (b) dust-removal.

Regarding the substitution of some other pigment for lead, the compilation goes on to state: "The possibility of substituting zinc for lead (referred to above) has been widely considered on its commercial and practical side; the question is still in its experimental stage, and no authoritative conclusion has been reached. The policies of other countries on the matter are briefly as follows: Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland are endeavouring to safeguard the painting trade by strict regulations, chiefly the prohibition of dry rubbing-down and the compulsory provision of washing-facilities. Switzerland tried total prohibition of white-lead in paints in 1904, but found it impracticable (no reason stated). Austria has since 1909 forbidden the use of white-lead for indoor work, and following upon this has recently put thirty-five varieties of leadless paint on the market (no information is given as to the result). France has since 1915 prohibited the use of white-lead in all painting operations on buildings, whether for interior or exterior work. (It is doubtful whether this has been rigidly