

113. The economic simplicity of the system, too, had its merits. From the youth's point of view, even if he paid a premium for a time, he was soon earning and, if he found the study too difficult, he could take his place at a lower level without wasting any time. In earlier times, when labour was not so mobile as it is to-day, there was considerable incentive to an employer to train a young man properly. The country as a whole was spared any expensive overhead.

114. In the early stages the gap between the professional class and those approximating to our present-day technicians was probably very small. The gap has, however, been widened markedly by the continually increasing fund of scientific knowledge which the professional man has to master. In fact, the latter has really achieved professional status at the point where he agrees to the imposition of a reasonably difficult qualifying examination. It is this examination that distinguishes the two groups, and it is this examination which, sooner or later, is liable to break down the pupilage system. As the standards are raised for one reason or another it becomes harder and harder for young men trained under the traditional methods to qualify. For one thing the employers are usually unable to give the theoretical instruction, and for another so much time is required that the apprentice becomes less and less an apprentice and more and more a student.

115. The development has not been the same in all professions. The legal profession, for example, has managed to avoid any conflict, but here work and study happen to go very closely hand in hand. In some other professions the attempt to obtain practical experience and to study at the same time has been given up completely as a matter of official policy.

(3) PRESENT NECESSITY FOR AT LEAST SOME OF THE ACADEMIC TRAINING TO BE FULL TIME

116. For a long time a large proportion of our professional engineers have gone to the University and received their B.E. degree without serving any form of cadetship. Without implying that this is an ideal practice, it may be stated that there is ample evidence to suggest that the pupilage system of the traditional type in professional engineering is breaking down. It is true that a few of those who commented in the questionnaire saw no difficulty facing students studying by correspondence or by private study or by other means entirely in their own time. Nevertheless, all the witnesses who were questioned on the point had no hesitation in stating that it is almost impossible for a youth to qualify to present standards unless he is granted some time off for study or lectures or both during the day while he is still fresh. The evidence of the Auckland Technical School showed that progressive employers accepted this, and willingly supported a scheme suggested by the school at the beginning of 1948. Under this scheme students are receiving time off without loss of pay, amounting in some cases to as much as twelve hours per week during the school session. Most witnesses considered that at least one year should be spent in full-time study. The Committee is in complete agreement with this view.

117. When this stage is reached the pupilage system is no longer self-sufficient. Once it is admitted that there must be some full-time study, then it appears to be only a matter of time before the period of full-time study is lengthened. There are many who see no objection to a lengthening of the full-time course. There are others, however, who would not welcome the change. The evidence suggests that some mechanical engineering firms and local bodies would be in this latter group.

118. Reference has been made to the traditional method of training in which the employer was both the theoretical and the practical tutor. In fact, it must be a long time since many employers gave theoretical instruction. Students sitting the examinations of the British Institutions or the Engineers Registration Board get tuition in a number of ways, including the technical schools and the Universities.