

bound from the ages of about fifteen to twenty. In no case, however, has a decrease in the period been yet made; on the contrary, in two industries, baking and pastrycooking and electrical working, the period has (by agreement of the committees) been increased from four to five years.

The minimum age at which apprenticeships may commence has not been altered to any extent. The Act, however, removes the authority formerly contained in the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act to fix the maximum age; in fact, it makes special provision under which adults may become apprentices subject to conditions to be approved by the respective apprenticeship committees. This provision was inserted to meet the statement that in past years a considerable number of boys have failed to become skilled workers, and have drifted into "blind-alley" work, attracted partly by the lure of the immediately higher wages there obtained, and also by the greater freedom of movement associated with such work, compared with the restrictions placed upon apprentices. Approval has been given by the committees to such apprenticeships in several instances, after being satisfied that the wages, period, and other conditions are fair.

In respect to the proportion of apprentices to journeymen the Act makes a departure from the previous practice, in that the Court is required in the first place to fix the proportion for the industry as a whole in the locality, leaving the number for any particular employer to be more or less according to his ability or facilities for teaching; the latter jurisdiction may be delegated to the committee if one is formed, and this has been done in every case. The proportion of apprentices for the industry as a whole is therefore now merely an average one. In pursuance of this authority permission to take apprentices has been refused to a number of employers, for example, on account of the lack of facilities for teaching, or until the employers are able to show that they are sufficiently established in business to continue as employers. In one instance the committee refused permission to apprentice a boy to a branch of the furniture trade on the ground that it was not a suitable industry in which to train apprentices; in another case the committee refused to authorize an employer in the building trade to take an apprentice as it considered that the employer was not a legitimate builder. In an order of the Court for motor engineering the taking of apprentices is subject to the committee concerned being satisfied in each case that the shop is sufficiently equipped for the training of apprentices.

Third, an important new provision is contained in section 5 (4) (a), which empowers the Court to require any employer or employers to employ a minimum number of apprentices in order to ensure an adequate future supply of journeymen. In making any such order the Court is required to take into account any recommendation made by the committee (if any) concerned. In this connection a return was compiled last year and submitted to the Court and to the respective committees; this showed that, in the sixteen chief towns, while 6,901 apprentices were then employed, the maximum proportion that had been fixed by the awards and industrial agreements under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act would have allowed of 8,022 additional apprentices, there being 22,086 journeymen (including working employers) engaged; in only two trades, plumbing and gasfitting, and jewellery and watchmaking, did the number approach the maximum allowed. A further return just compiled as for April, 1925, shows no material alteration in the position, the number of apprentices being still 1 to every 3·2 journeymen. In the building trades, which are generally assumed to have been short of skilled labour, the following proportions are shown as employed: Bricklaying, 1 apprentice to 4·5 journeymen; carpentering and joinery, 1 apprentice to 3·9 journeymen; painting, 1 apprentice to 5·4 journeymen; plastering, 1 apprentice to 3·2 journeymen; plumbing and gasfitting, 1 apprentice to 2·1 journeymen. It is a question for the Court and committees to consider whether these proportions are sufficient to provide the supply of skilled labour likely to be required for the future; this year's information will be forwarded to the Court and to the committees concerned.

Fourth, the Court may also exercise the following powers, or may delegate them to the respective committees; the Court has in its orders delegated these functions to the committees accordingly where the latter have been set up:—

- Section 5 (4) (b.): To cancel any contract of apprenticeship; for instance, where the committee is satisfied that the apprentice is not suited to the industry. (No orders have so far been issued under this provision.)
- (c.) To prohibit an employer from employing apprentices. (Action to this effect was taken by the committees concerned in several instances—see second paragraph on this page.)
- (d.) To order the transfer of any apprentice to another employer who is willing to take him—for example, where the committee considers that better or further training can thus be obtained. (No orders yet issued.)
- (e.) Where the committee considers that the original employer should give better training than hitherto it may order him to do so. (A case in the furniture trade involving two apprentices was considered by the committee concerned, which held over further action till later. A case against a plasterer, who had, in the opinion of the committee, failed to properly teach an apprentice was referred to the District Registrar; as the apprenticeship contract had not been registered, legal proceedings were taken for that offence, and a conviction was obtained; the apprentice was then placed with another employer. Another case occurred in the carpentering and joinery trade, when a delegation of the committee interviewed the firm and the matter was amicably settled.)
- (f.) To fix the period of probation for each industry. It was considered by many that the usual period hitherto fixed in awards and agreements under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (three months) was too short, and, moreover, that it should vary according to circumstances; power was therefore inserted in this section to fix the period for each industry or for any apprentice. (The period has accordingly been extended in several industries to four and six months.)