

The Act does not apply to females unless specially ordered by the Court in any case. In two instances (hairdressing and chemistry) females have been included in the orders covering those trades.

The Act has now been in operation for four years. During each year it has been found that an increasing number of committees has been set up, and during the past year the number increased from 115 to 126, representing twenty-eight industries. For particulars see below. (It may be noted that a number of the committees cover two or more industries.) Most of the skilled trades are now represented in the sixteen chief towns of the Dominion. On the whole, the representatives of the employers and workers on the various committees are co-operating amicably, and, generally speaking, adequate steps are being taken to see that the apprentices and their employers are carrying out their duties to one another and to their industries. The chief difficulty experienced by the committees in reaching agreement relates to the question of the proportion of apprentices to journeymen.

The following information is given respecting the work done under this Act from its inception in 1924 :—

The Act provides that, in order that every encouragement and assistance should be given to boys to proceed to skilled trades, reports on the boys leaving schools should be forwarded by head teachers to the Department, which would then get into touch with the boys and their parents, inviting them, where employment is required, to make application accordingly to the Department. Employers were also invited to obtain the boys required by them from the Department's offices. The arrangement was duly carried out to the end of 1926, but owing to the small response by employers, no doubt due to the trade depression, has been suspended.

From the table on page 12 it will be seen that employers in the skilled trades are already employing a fair proportion of apprentices, equalling one apprentice to 2·9 journeymen on the average.

The Act also provides that an Apprenticeship Committee may be formed in any industry or group of industries in any locality by agreement between any organizations of employers and workers. The accompanying list shows the industries in which committees have been set up, with the number of such committees. In nearly every case an apprenticeship order of the Court of Arbitration has also been made fixing the wages and other general conditions of employment of apprentices.

Industries.	Number of Committees.	Industries.	Number of Committees.
Baking and pastrycooking	9	Leadlight and glass working	3
Boilermaking	10	Letterpress, lithographing, and book-binding	7
Bootmaking	5	Masonry (stone and monumental)	2
Boot-repairing	1	Motor engineering	6
Bricklaying	3	Moulding	11
Carpentering and joinery	14	Painting	12
Chemistry (pharmaceutical)	1	Plastering	5
Clothing trade	3	Plumbing and gasfitting	14
Coachbuilding	4	Saddlery	2
Electrical working	8	Tailoring	4
Engineering	13	Tinsmithing	2
Furniture trades	8	Typographing	7
Gardening	1	Wicker-working	1
Hairdressing	4		
Jewellery and watchmaking	1		

One committee (plumbing trade) was dissolved by order of the Court owing to disagreement between the workers' and employers' representatives. This disagreement arose chiefly on the question of the proportion of apprentices to journeymen. The parties have since formed a new committee.

As above stated, the Act permits of separate committees being formed in the respective industries in any particular localities in order that the members may, by being on the spot, readily keep in personal touch with the boys and their employers. Accordingly all the committees have been set up for either specified towns or districts. There are only a few unimportant industries in which no Apprenticeship Committees have been set up or orders of the Court made, such as those of coopers, horse-shoers, beamsmen, and carriers.

The Court is next required to make general orders fixing the wages, hours, and other conditions of employment of apprentices; also the periods of apprenticeship, the minimum (not the maximum) age at which an apprenticeship may commence, and the proportion of apprentices to journeymen. There are now 103 orders of the Court in force, ten being made during the past year; most, if not all, of these have been agreed upon by the parties concerned.

Under the amending Act of last session the provisions regarding the "district proportion" of apprentices ceased to operate as from 1st February last. This had been inserted in the original Act to enable the Court to fix the total maximum number of apprentices that might be employed in an industry in a district; the number to be employed by any employer within the district—not exceeding in the aggregate the district total as above mentioned—was then to be determined by either the Apprenticeship Committee (if any) or the Court, having regard to the facilities possessed by the employer for teaching apprentices. (Hitherto the proportion of apprentices to journeymen had been fixed equally for each employer irrespective of his ability to train boys.) It was found in practice, however, that in certain industries in which the demand for apprentices was great the reaching of the district total prevented some employers from taking any apprentices even though possessing adequate facilities for teaching them; hence the amendment. The requisite elasticity may now be exercised by the Court or committee by increasing or decreasing the number that may be employed by particular employers.