

daughters to receive their training. We would be in a very unsafe position if we depended solely on immigration to supply us with mechanics of the necessary training and skill to carry on our industries.

The Apprenticeship Act now in operation could, with some amendment, be made to safeguard the interests of the employer and apprentice so long as the period of apprenticeship lasts. It does not, however, go far enough. Provision should, in our opinion, be made for young people to receive more complete training in technical schools or agricultural colleges when they are unable to get positions as apprentices in the desired industries in private employ. During the present period of trade depression many young people have drifted into blind-alley occupations or into unemployment because their period of ordinary school had finished and they could not obtain positions as apprentices.

Another way in which the Apprentice Act does not go far enough is that it does not ensure to a boy or girl who has served a period of apprenticeship at a trade that he or she will be given any preference of employment at that trade over other youths who have served no period of apprenticeship. In order to overcome this and to ensure efficiency and higher standards of work which would result in cheaper products, we suggest there should be introduced a system of registration for all industries, employers, and employees, similar to that which is now in force for some industries and for most of the professions.

Under the present system there is no barrier on the side of employers—at least, to any one who can find the capital necessary—engaging in any industry. This we think is wrong, and tends to keep the standard of efficiency low; and, as we aim in these proposals to raise the status of each trade and industry, that freedom of entry, with consequent waste of capital, must cease. As employers demand a certain standard of efficiency amongst employees, so employees have a right, though they have never hitherto exercised it, to demand a certain standard of efficiency amongst employers, and industry as a whole should now exercise that right. We suggest, therefore, that there should be a certain standard of efficiency set as a qualification for admission to the unions on both sides, and that only those who were admitted as members of the unions should be allowed to practise either as employer or employee in the industry concerned. This idea, though new to industry, is not by any means unknown amongst us; and if any one thinks it is, let him put up a sign and try to practise in the professions of law, or medicine, or certain other professions: he will soon find that the barriers which we here propose for industry are already in existence in those professions. All we propose is in reality that the status of industry shall be raised to that of those professions. Rules and standards of admissions would not be very stringent at first, but could be gradually raised from time to time by the consent of the industry, and it would be found that the quality of the work performed would improve as the machinery of this scheme operated; and as the work improved, so would it be possible to raise the standards of admission to the industry without injury to any one. We believe that by this method “shoddy work” would be eliminated, as it is usually the result of industry catering for the needs of a market that has never been educated to demand the best article that industry could produce.

We suggest that this Conference should agree to a greater degree of continuous co-operation between employers and employed by the establishment of a National Council of Industry with provision for branches in each district or in each industry. The duty of the Council or Councils would be—

- (1) To promote the continuous and progressive improvement of industry, and to advance the well-being and status of all connected with it:
- (2) To arrange for and carry out the registration of all now engaged in an industry, employers and employees, and to provide for future admissions to the industry.
- (3) Registration to be granted to all who, on the passing of an empowering Act, had been engaged in the industry for six consecutive months, and who apply for such registration within six months after the passing of such Act, and thereafter no person to be admitted unless he can produce from the Apprenticeship Committee of the trade and district a certificate of his competency for admission:
- (4) To gather statistics concerning the industry, so as to be able to provide as far as possible continuous employment for all in the industry, and to prevent unemployment or wastage of capital or labour:
- (5) To arrange, in conjunction with Apprenticeship Committees and technical schools, for adequate facilities for technical training for members of the industry, and improvement of processes, design and standards of workmanship, apprenticeship, research.
- (6) Publicity: To issue information upon all matters concerning the industry; to enlighten public opinion as to the services rendered by the industry, and to educate public opinion to demand ever better services and workmanship from the industry.

Methods: The National Council would set up District Councils and Local Councils similar to the existing Apprenticeship Committee. It would seek the assistance of trade-unions and employers' associations—in fact, any person or organization which could provide assistance or put forward suggestions enabling the Council better to carry out its functions.

Under this system we consider that the standard of work would be improved and at the same time the price to the public for good work would be reduced. Information and experience would be gained which would be invaluable to industry, to the Government, and the public generally, and would stimulate advancement and improvement.

It is obvious that employers, workmen, and the public suffer severely under present industrial conditions. The results show themselves in lockouts, strikes, low wages, unemployment, bankruptcies, and increased costs of production, which will eventually result in a lowered capacity on the part of industry to maintain even existing standards of living. Past and present relations between employers and employed do not conduce to the maximum output or to economy in production and distribution. The proposals herein contained for consideration by conference are put forward as evidence of a sincere desire on the part of organized labour to bring about an improved condition beneficial to all parties. (*Applause.*)