

with too many conditions, such as quota of apprentices, for instance. He did hope that they would consider the children; they did not want them to drift into "dead-end" jobs; they should be given their opportunity the same as they, the delegates, had had.

Mr. J. W. ROBERTS pointed out that many tradesmen were out of employment, and he was quite sure that if the motion were carried it would mean that many more boys would be put to the trades and more journeymen would be thrown out of employment, and unemployment would be more acute. If they wanted to train tradesmen they ought to be able to have some security of employment instead of training them up to go somewhere else.

Mr. E. R. B. HOLBEN did not think there was any likelihood of the trade or the apprentices being abused, because there was always a number unwilling to go to a trade because of the wages being small to start with. If they could teach a boy a trade, let him have it by all means; he would be a better citizen. There had always been hewers of wood and drawers of water, and always would be.

Mr. H. BRADLEY considered that everybody had a right to go to the occupation that he most desired and in which he was most likely to be successful. If they were going to debar boys from going to an occupation he maintained they would be doing an absolute injustice. The country would in any case have to deal with eleven thousand boys each year, and the number was increasing year by year. It was far better for boys to receive a trade than to be put into "dead-end" occupations. The unskilled were finding more difficulty in regard to unemployment than the skilled. The Government should see that every skilled artisan was given sufficient work. It was an absolutely suicidal policy for the Government to allow tradesmen to be idle while allowing goods to be imported into the country the production of which was the legitimate job of these unemployed men. They wanted to give every boy a trade—to allow him to learn the trade he thought he was cut out for, and see that their industries and their trades were not penalized by the importation of goods from foreign countries where a lower rate of wages pertained.

The CHAIRMAN said that they should all realize that this question was the crux of the whole matter. It was a matter which the country expected the Conference to consider, and to come to some decision about which was worthy of consideration by the Government. It was not correct to say there were eleven thousand boys leaving primary schools each year: the actual number was twenty-five thousand per annum, boys and girls, leaving the primary and secondary schools. It was no good saying they had only to consider the boys, because they all knew that girls played an important part in industry. The problem in this country, and every other in the world, is what to do with the boys and girls. His own opinion—not that of his organization—was that every boy and girl should have the right to learn some trade. He differed from the mover of the motion in that he thought that apprenticeship must be regarded as part of education, part of the work of training oneself for life. He differed also in the matter of employers being allowed to have an unlimited number of apprentices. Apprenticeship should be the whole function of the State, and the training of apprentices should be taken out of the hands of private employers and should become part of the functions of the State—part of education. It was obvious that apprentices could not teach apprentices—they must have a sufficient number of trained men to guide the apprentices in learning their trade—and if the resolution were carried in its present form some employers would have their works staffed with apprentices, and it would be impossible for the apprentices to get the proper grounding in trade. It would also mean that if they gave that power to District Registrars or committees it would be impossible for Registrars or committees to adjudicate fairly as between employer and employer. New Zealand had reached the stage where provision would have to be made for its own children. They did depend on the immigration of skilled men when the country could not produce them. That, however, had changed. They had now to provide for their own boys and girls, but not to stop immigration entirely. Unless there were a very radical change in New Zealand methods New Zealand workers could not possibly be employed to the full. It was their duty to carefully consider the matter and to see if they could arrive at some suggestion which would meet with the favourable consideration of the Government and would be acceptable to the people as a whole. It was not only a question which concerned them, and a very considerable section of the community, but it was concerning every country in the world, and what the ultimate solution would be was not for him to say. He was in agreement with the principle underlying the resolution, but not with the methods suggested for carrying it out.

Mr. E. R. B. HOLBEN said that if the resolution were not carried it might be advisable to consider the question of curtailing the number of boys and girls entering the technical schools. They technically educated these boys, encouraged them to take up trades, and then said they should not learn a trade.

Mr. A. C. MITCHELL said that he was in favour of the principle of the resolution but not in favour of the method of application. He did not favour the suggestion which had been made that the Government should be the training authority for the apprentices, as the scheme was not capable of general application—it was not feasible. He thought it was right that a boy should be able to take up the trade that he thought he was fitted for and for which his primary training had to some extent qualified him, but he was not certain that it would be wise to lift the bar and have an unlimited number of apprentices. The position was one fraught with much danger; it was not a problem easy of solution, but it was for the Conference to give a lead in the matter. The whole purpose of the 1923 Apprentices Act was to find a better means to absorb more of the young people in the industries and to give them a better training. That that Act did not achieve its purpose was admitted. If this Conference could find a solution to the problem it would have undoubtedly justified its existence.

Mr. F. D. CORNWELL said that prior to the Act coming into operation there was a great shortage of apprentices. He thought to-day there were about ten or eleven thousand apprentices registered under the Apprentices Act, and ventured to say that there was not one-third of that number under the old system. There was one apprentice to every three journeymen, roughly speaking. He mentioned