

RETURN SHOWING NUMBER OF APPRENTICES EMPLOYED IN SKILLED TRADES, APRIL, 1937.

(The figures for the previous year are shown in parentheses.)

Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.
Baking ..	213 (111)	Electrical ..	381 (214)	Plumbing ..	299 (213)
Boatbuilding ..	22 (14)	Electroplating ..	2 (1)	Plastering ..	62 (38)
Boilermaking ..	26 (24)	Engineering ..	581 (387)	Printing ..	556 (502)
Bootmaking ..	202 (184)	Motor engineering ..	668 (585)	Saddlery ..	33 (23)
Boot-repairing ..	28 (19)	Furniture ..	478 (313)	Sail and tent ..	2 (..)
Blacksmithing ..	17 (7)	Gardening ..	13 (7)	Signwriting ..	1 (1)
Bricklaying ..	22 (5)	Hairdressing ..	96 (66)	Tailoring ..	19 (14)
Carpentering ..	604 (348)	Jewellery ..	25 (19)	Tanning ..	.. (4)
Clothing ..	158 (91)	Leadlight ..	13 (4)	Tinsmithing ..	120 (75)
Coachbuilding ..	285 (85)	Masonry ..	14 (8)	Wicker-working ..	11 (8)
Coopering ..	5 (5)	Moulding ..	73 (29)		
Curriers ..	1 (..)	Painting ..	168 (105)	Totals	5,231 (3,552)
Cycle-working ..	24 (13)	Photo-engraving ..	9 (..)		

The following table shows the number of apprentices employed in each year since 1928:—

April.	Number of Apprentices.	April.	Number of Apprentices.
1928 ..	10,227	1933 ..	5,594
1929 ..	9,943	1934 ..	4,303
1930 ..	9,826	1935 ..	3,329
1931 ..	8,901	1936 ..	3,552
1932 ..	6,910	1937 ..	5,231

The Department's records indicate that in normal times there are approximately 10,000 registered apprentices employed, which, viewed in another way, means that normally 2,000 fully-trained apprentices enter the ranks of the skilled tradesmen every year. At the end of April the number of registered contracts was just over 5,000, and for a number of years less than this number has been recorded. Thus the number of apprentices is considerably less than is necessary to counteract normal wastage. Because of the position as outlined, a shortage in the skilled trades is inevitable for some years. If the normal requirement of industry is as above stated, an additional 5,000 apprentices are required at the present time, while the average annual shortage of new apprentices in the previous nine years has been 720. All these extra apprentices could be engaged without infringement of the proportion clauses of apprenticeship orders. The estimated number of apprentices that may be employed without exceeding the proportion allowed under the various orders of the Court is 14,370. A reluctance on the part of employers to take on apprentices was evident from 1931 onwards, and it is of considerable interest, therefore, to note that in 1936–37 there were 2,328 contracts registered, as compared with 1,292 in 1935–36.

In respect of those youths who, on account of the depression, were unfortunate in not being able to enter the skilled trades, provision was made in the Statutes Amendment Act last session to enable the Minister of Labour to approve of contracts of apprenticeship in respect of youths of eighteen years of age and over under any conditions the Minister thinks fit. This provision was made especially to meet the case of those youths who missed their opportunity during the depression and to enable them to become tradesmen.

To facilitate the absorption of these youths and to cope with the need for apprentices in the skilled trades generally, discussions between the parties interested have taken place with a view to launching an intensive campaign for the placing in suitable occupations (under special contracts of apprenticeship where the occupation is an apprenticeship one) of young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. As a result, committees representative of employers' and manufacturers' organizations, the workers' organizations, and Government officers (District Registrars and Placement Officers) have been established for the purpose of securing the effective co-operation of all parties in overcoming any difficulties that may arise.

Apart from this special effort, it may be pointed out that a considerable improvement in the apprenticeship position has already taken place during the first quarter of 1937–38—i.e., before the establishment of the committees just referred to—1,531 apprenticeship contracts having been submitted for registration during that period. Of these, 638 had been registered, while 893 were still under action at the end of the quarter.

Statistics published by the Department in previous annual reports reveal that in respect of the building industry apprentices to skilled trades decreased from 1928 to about 21 per cent. of the figure at that date. An examination of the position at the end of June, 1937, indicated that already recovery had taken place to the extent that the number of apprentices then engaged was approximately 45 per cent. of the 1928 total, the latter being taken as normal requirements. There is thus still considerable scope for the placing of apprentices in this industry.

The Statutes Amendment Act, 1936, was passed on the 31st October, 1936, but up to the end of the financial year—viz., 31st March, 1937—comparatively little use had been made of the statute, only thirty-six special contracts being registered in pursuance of its provisions. Probably this was due to the fact that few employers were fully aware of the provisions of the legislation, although it had received a considerable amount of publicity, both during enactment and subsequently. During the period 1st April to 30th June, 1937, forty-nine such contracts were registered, but these figures do not include cases where the approval of the Minister had been given but the contract had not actually been registered. In this connection it may be mentioned that from the passing of the legislation to the 23rd July, 1937, the Minister has approved 132 special contracts.