

The *Apprentices Act*, 1923, was enacted after a Conference, convened by the Minister of Labour, had discussed and reported upon a draft Bill, and, indeed, the proceedings of the Conference show that it gave close consideration to many of the questions which have come before the present Commission. Prior to 1923 the provisions governing the conditions of employment of apprentices were incorporated in awards of the Court of Arbitration, the tribunal which was established by the *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act* of 1894 to deal with industrial disputes.

The *Apprentices Act*, 1923, prohibited the inclusion of provisions as to apprenticeships in awards and industrial agreements, but, on the other hand, empowered the Court of Arbitration to make special orders governing apprenticeships for each industry or branch thereof to which the Act applied. The policy behind the Act was to remove matters relating to the training and welfare of apprentices as far as possible from the field of industrial bargaining. Apprenticeship orders have been made in thirty-seven different industries. Under the statute the Court is deemed to act as a controlling authority, but provision is also made for delegation to district Apprenticeship Committees of a number of the Court's powers. The effect of such delegation is to transfer a substantial share of the responsibility for the detailed administration of the system to local Committees. The Act also provides for a Registrar of Apprentices and for District Registrars, but these officers have in general been concerned only with registration of contracts of apprenticeship and with enforcement of the Act and of the regulations and orders made thereunder.

For a considerable period it has been thought that in any year there should be approximately ten thousand apprentices coming within the scope of the *Apprentices Act* in order to ensure an adequate supply of journeymen in the various skilled trades. The table in the Appendix shows not only the total number of apprentices for each year from 1928 onwards, but also the numbers in each trade. The numbers of new contracts registered in each of the last nine years are—

1936	..	..	1,292	1941	..	..	1,974
1937	..	..	2,328	1942	..	..	2,411
1938	..	..	3,235	1943	..	..	1,917
1939	..	..	2,700	1944	..	..	2,096
1940	..	..	2,840	Average	..	..	2,314

The Commission has not deemed it necessary or advisable to try to determine the number of apprentices required in future to maintain an adequate supply of journeymen. Such inquiries are better made by those immediately concerned in each trade; moreover, the estimating of the numbers of apprentices necessary will be dependent on a knowledge of the probable trends in each industry. The Organization for National Development recently established by the Government will, it is hoped, be more adequately equipped to supply information on such trends than any other body, and, as its findings become available, those concerned with apprenticeship should review the position of their respective industries periodically and determine the approximate number of new apprentices required from year to year. We appreciate, however, that this task is a most difficult and exacting one, for it must be remembered that in most industries the youths who are apprenticed to-day will not affect the supply of journeymen until a period of five years has elapsed.

The building industry is one which is very vitally interested in apprenticeship and one whose fortunes have in the past fluctuated most violently with economic changes. Certain witnesses made very strong submissions to us that a long-term plan should be devised and adopted for the industry, with the object of achieving a measure of stability which would be of advantage alike to employers, workers, and the community in general. While consideration of such a proposal is outside our order of reference, nevertheless we would express the view that without such a plan it will be a matter of the very greatest difficulty to determine with any reasonable degree of accuracy the probable future requirements of the various classes of building journeymen. We agree that stability in the building industry would be the best foundation on which to set up a satisfactory training scheme for apprentices in the industry.

After full consideration of the evidence placed before us as to the efficacy or otherwise of the *Apprentices Act*, 1923, we are satisfied that, in the main, the general structure of the Act is sound. The principal weaknesses are in the provisions for administrative machinery, and we now proceed to suggest a number of reforms which we hope will remedy the present unsatisfactory state of affairs; most of them will necessitate amendments to the Act.

A COMMISSIONER OF APPRENTICESHIP

It appears to us that under the present set-up there is lacking some administrative officer or body whose function it is to take the initiative. It is true that the Court of Arbitration is deemed to act as a controlling authority under the Act (section 2), but, at the same time, it has several functions to perform which are clearly judicial (sections 6 and 9). It is therefore not a fit and proper body to take initiative, although we see no reason why it should not continue to be deemed to act as a controlling authority. We recommend, therefore, that there should be appointed for the Dominion a Commissioner of Apprenticeship, who should devote his whole time to apprenticeship matters. He should be attached to the Labour Department, and should be Chairman and principal executive officer of each of the Dominion Apprenticeship Committees the setting-up of which we recommend later. The nature of his other duties may be gathered from subsequent references in this report. In at least the four main cities there should also be appointed full-time Deputy Commissioners of Apprenticeship. They should have power to delegate their functions to appropriate officers of the Labour Department in those areas which have local Apprenticeship Committees but which are too far removed from the main centres to allow the Deputy Commissioners to keep in close touch with the Committees and the apprentices in the areas. The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioners would undertake the duties of registration now carried on by the Registrar of Apprentices and the District Registrars.

Wherever there are local Apprenticeship Committees, the Deputy Commissioners or their authorized representatives would be the Chairmen and executive officers. One of the duties of these officers would be to bring Committees back to life where they are inactive, and to take the initiative in getting them set up where they are not in existence. We believe that local Committees are an integral and most necessary part of the system of apprenticeship. We do not propose a bureaucracy in their place, but merely the appointment of officers who will be active agents in seeing that Committees are set up, and in getting them to function completely. It would also be the duty of the Deputy Commissioners