

The main efforts of an industrial health Department in the immediate future and for years to come must be directed to altering working-conditions so that the minimum standards laid down in the Factories Act are attained. The task is an immense one. Two of the many difficulties to be overcome are the absence of trained personnel to work in this field and the large number of very small establishments.

The appointment of four whole-time industrial Medical Officers to work in the four main centres has now been agreed, but no decision has yet been reached on the exact relationship between the medical men in the Health Department and the Factory Inspectors in the Labour Department. The backbone of the service must be the Factory Inspector, trained in health and safety inspection, who has *time* to make regular routine inspections. To-day not only is the Inspector without training in this field, but he has no time for it. The pressure on the Labour Department, as far as work in factories is concerned, is to deal with complaints arising out of awards, to look after apprentices and settlers, to enrol those out of work and to fill vacancies, to survey the over-all labour situation in the country, and to settle industrial disputes. Rarely does any one come along and demand that a routine factory inspection be made, and consequently, with so much to do, this is the field that can most easily be allowed to lie fallow. Unless there are trained men allotted specifically to this task, it is difficult to see how any real start can be made.

Routine inspection of the small factory is very time-consuming and inevitably doomed to achieve very little. Remarkable initiative and a great deal of painstaking effort is much in evidence among many of these small producers. Their production cannot be regarded as rationally organized in this age of advanced technical equipment; nevertheless, they are contributing a substantial quantity and a considerable *variety* of goods to the national economy.

Socially speaking, however, the small factory has one very serious drawback—namely, that working-conditions in so far as amenities are concerned are virtually certain to be of a low standard. It is financially impossible for a man setting up as a manufacturer in a small way and only employing a few workers to spend the necessary capital that is required to conform with the provisions of the Factories Act in regard to lunch-room, cloak-room, and washing and sanitary accommodation. He has great difficulty also in putting aside cash and labour hours for maintenance and cleaning. Vigorous enforcement of the Factories Act in the case of employers of under 10 persons would bring a proportion up to the required standard, but if pushed to the point of legal action would drive many out of business.

While a practical compromise policy can be adopted for the present-day situation, it appears desirable to give consideration to a radical solution of the problem of amenities in the small establishments. Fundamentally the law requires, and every one would desire, high standards for *all* workers, regardless of whether they work in a large or in a small establishment. Such a solution is offered by the “flatted” factory.

A flatted factory is a large building capable of housing 50 or 100 manufacturers employing in the aggregate 500 to 1,000 workers. If such a building is constructed of five or six stories, as is a modern block of flats, an enormous saving of space is attained, and there are great advantages from the town-planning point of view. So many of the smaller places are virtually factory slums, and more are developing every day. From the architectural point of view a flatted factory offers an opportunity for dignified design that will be a lasting credit to our cities.