

seem to be suggested by one provision in the British Act, reducing in certain cases the contributions of the employers who give their workers regular employment; this provision is to the effect that instead of the employer and worker each contributing 2½d. per week (or 10s. 10d. each per year) the employer may pay the sum of 15s. at the beginning of the year, deducting the worker's contribution of 2½d. per week from his wages, with the net result, if he continues to employ the worker throughout the year, that the employer's contribution is only 4s. 2d.

The chief causes of unemployment may, I think, be briefly classified thus:—

(1.) That sufficient steps are not taken to see that boys, and perhaps also girls, upon leaving the primary schools are put in the way of becoming competent at some definite occupations. They are allowed to drift wherever they or their parents please, and, as they can earn better money at unskilled work, there is great inducement to their parents, especially those who are poor, to put them to such work in preference to having them taught useful trades. In his explanation of the Bill introduced in England Mr. Lloyd George stated that one of the causes of suffering due to unemployment is that legions of boys receive no other training than that of messenger or porter, that as the boys grow up they are replaced by younger boys at the commencing-wage, and they are therefore faced with destitution and deterioration. We frequently find in New Zealand that boys of sixteen or seventeen years of age are able to earn almost the same wages as adults at such places as brickworks, flax-mills, &c., while if apprenticed to skilled trades they would frequently receive only a sum of 5s. or 8s. per week to start. It might be mentioned here that in Strasburg, if the parents cannot afford to apprentice their children, the wages are subsidized from the insurance fund in order to enable them to do so.

(2.) That in intermittent trades those workers who are perhaps competent enough always lose a certain amount of time owing to the ordinary fluctuations of their employment, such as farm hands, builders, and slaughtermen.

(3.) Then there are those workers who have found that the occupations they have chosen are unsuitable for them, or who through various causes over which they have no control find that they are unable to continue at their trades: this may be caused by lack of proper training, or by the introduction of new machinery or appliances, or through accident or sickness.

Regarding the first of these causes, a good deal is done in Germany and Switzerland in the direction of training boys and girls in suitable occupations. Reports upon the systems in vogue there have been perused, and advantage might be taken of the experience gained in these countries.

OCCUPATIONS OF BOYS UPON LEAVING SCHOOL.

Steps might therefore be first taken to get into touch with the boys in the principal centres upon their leaving the primary schools, in order to ascertain whether they are taking up such occupations as are likely to afford them suitable and regular employment; and where it is found that such is not the case the Department should be able, by means of its knowledge of the requirements of employers and of trade generally, to guide many of the boys into the right avenues of employment.*

In this connection it might be pointed out that it is the boys that are likely to drift into unskilled occupations to whom particular attention should be given. In support of the systems in vogue in Germany and Switzerland it may be stated that in England quite a number of employers in a large way of business make it compulsory for their boy and girl employees to attend continuation classes, and some of the employers even establish their own schools for the purpose.

OTHER REMEDIES.

Regarding those workers who find themselves inefficient at their work, it is interesting to note that in the British Act provision is made by which an insurance officer may, if he is satisfied that the failure of a worker to obtain or retain employment at his calling is due to lack of skill or knowledge, authorize his free attendance at technical instruction provided by the State. Without some such assistance these workers would drift into the ranks of unskilled labour.

It has already been decided by the Government to assist farm workers in the country districts to supplement their present intermittent employment upon farms by providing them with workers' dwellings upon allotments of 5 or 10 acres of land suitable for close cultivation. There is no doubt that an extension of this system where possible, even to smaller allotments in the suburbs of the principal towns, would be most useful in reducing the evils of casual employment, and would also add somewhat to the primary productions of the country. In quite a number of cases applicants for workers' dwellings in the towns express a desire for sections of about an acre in order that they may grow their own vegetables, keep poultry, and the like.

* It is estimated that in the four chief centres the number of boys leaving the schools is about five thousand per annum.