

## No. 2.

## REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st March, 1917.

We have the honour to submit the following report on technical instruction in the Dominion for the year ending the 31st December, 1916 :—

Reviewing the year's work of the technical schools it is gratifying to be able to report that although so large a proportion of the youth of the Dominion has enlisted in response to the call for reinforcements, the majority of the classes have been maintained at their normal strength. A few only have been abandoned through lack of support, while others have had so large an influx of students that the average attendance has been well maintained. Few new developments have, however, to be recorded, but speaking generally it has been a year in which reconsideration of purpose, concentration of effort, and increasing efficiency may be said to be outstanding features. It is now quite clear to progressive and well-informed members of the community, as well as to those most intimately connected with the conduct of the schools and classes, that, now that the value of and the necessity for vocational training is well established, the time is more than ripe for the reconsideration of some of the fundamental problems of vocational education; and probably the most important of these is the readjustment of educational, industrial, and economic ideals with a view to arriving at definite conclusions as to the forms the industrial training should take, the amount of time to be devoted to it, and at what period of the day the instruction should be imparted.

Industrial and economic changes largely brought about by the growth of scientific knowledge, and the keen competition between the nations in the markets of the world, have proved that the old system of apprenticeship which was developed when industry was stable, methodical, and regular does not of itself give a training which fits boys for modern industrial conditions; and that intelligent manipulative ability and the formation of industrial habits cannot be attained in the workshop under the ordinary conditions of labour; and, further, it is no longer debated that if "recognized types of vocational efficiency" are to be reproduced the requisite training can be accomplished only in schools and institutions in which the best equipped laboratories and workshops and the best teaching skill of the country are available, supplemented later by a period of training in the industrial workshop under the best conditions of productive effort. If, as is asserted, "vocational training is designed to make efficient producers," then the technical colleges in which practical and theoretical training receives for the most part proportional attention appear to be, at present, the best institutions for providing the future producers with their preliminary training; and if this country is to reap a full harvest from the effort and money expended on them, and if as a nation we are to have the invaluable asset which is to be found in a large body of skilful and intelligent mechanic and general workers, such economic and industrial adjustments will have to be made as will afford the State and the individual the greatest advantage of the training given. "What a man is trained for—the skilled performance of his own trade, and the enlightened service of his country and his race—these things he will do."

Trade and industrial concerns being organized on the assumption that the labour of a fairly large proportion of boys and girls is available for eight hours of each working-day—any suggestion that attendance at classes for technical training during the evening is unsatisfactory from many points of view is, in some quarters, viewed with the gravest suspicion; and if a further hint be given as to the desirability of all technical training for young persons under eighteen years of age being conducted during the day, visions of dislocated industry, diminished output, and monetary loss arise in the same quarters. It is, however, gratifying to know that there is a growing conviction both in this country and at Home that this problem will have to be considered from a totally different point of view, and much has already been done in the Motherland in that direction. From the report of a departmental committee on "Juvenile Education in relation to Employment after the War" presented to the Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education, England, it is gathered that the most extensive inquiry has been made on, and the best thought given to, "what steps should be taken to make provision for the education and instruction of young persons after the war." The necessity for the provision is stressed by showing the failure of the apprenticeship system, and the number of boys and girls who drift into blind-alley occupations; and, further, after showing that without the aid of formal training it is impossible to establish the character and develop the industrial efficiency of young citizens, remedies and proposals are suggested. Under the heading "Remedies" the following introductory remarks are worthy of the closest consideration: "What then are the remedies? In a sense there is only one remedy—*Porro unum est necessarium*. But it is a pretty thorough-going one: nothing less than a complete change of temper and outlook on the part of the people of this country as to what they mean through the forces of industry and society to make of their boys and girls. Can the age of adolescence be brought out of the purview of economic exploitation and into that of the social conscience? Can the conception of the juvenile as primarily a little wage-earner be replaced by the conception of the juvenile as primarily the workman and the citizen in training? Can it be established that the educational purpose is to