

APPRENTICESHIP.

The training of skilled artisans by apprenticeship is an important feature of our industrial development. There is a marked shortage of apprentices throughout the Dominion, and this difficulty is accentuated by the fact that many apprentices lost the last year of their training by enlisting at twenty years of age. Even before the declaration of war there was a shortage of apprentices and qualified artisans. Therefore, with the industrial development that we can reasonably expect in the future, there will be great demand for skilled artisans. It will thus be seen that the apprenticeship question is vital to our success in all industrial branches of our national activities. The quality of the products of our workshops and factories proves abundantly that on the whole our tradesmen are well qualified in the handicraft of their trades, but the conditions of the future will call for more scientific knowledge and technical education.

Status of Skilled Artisan.

The Committee finds that the status and remuneration of the skilled artisan is at present little, and in some cases not at all, higher than that of the unskilled labourer, and that until this anomaly is removed we cannot expect our youths to undergo a period of training as apprentices unless we make apprenticeship more attractive and materially improve the status and emoluments of skilled artisans.

Suggested Scheme of Apprenticeship.

The method of apprenticeship now in force in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., known as the "co-operative industrial course," is worthy of serious consideration. The course extends over a period of four years. The first year—when the boy is between fourteen and fifteen years of age—is spent entirely in the trade or continuation school, and during that time he specializes in those subjects which will best fit him for the trade he has decided to take up, or, where he has not already done so, is encouraged to come to a decision, and then receives that tuition which will assist in equipping him for his career. For the next three years—that is to say, when he is between fifteen and eighteen years of age—the lad divides his time between the school and the workshops. All the boys are "paired" in each trade, so that while one is in school the other is in the shop or factory, and *vice versa*. This plan has proved successful in Pennsylvania.

Strengthening Technical Schools.

Your Committee recognizes that the limited capacity of the technical schools does not at present permit of the Pennsylvania scheme being adopted forthwith, but legislation on the lines of that scheme should be enacted without delay and the schools strengthened as speedily as possible to enable this much sounder and more beneficial system to be brought into vogue.

Qualification of Apprentices.

No apprentice should be regarded as fully qualified until he has proved by examination that he has acquired a fair knowledge of the science and technique of his trade, in addition to having acquired the usual standard of practical knowledge and skill.

SHIPPING.

The question of shipping is all-important to an insular country such as New Zealand, and taking into account the vast amount of produce disposed of abroad, as well as the fact that we require a very large volume of imports, it becomes imperative to consider our present position. The total value of produce and merchandise annually transported by sea—to and from abroad—amounts to over £53,000,000.

The regular passenger-transportation traffic, especially that between the North and South Islands, is of necessity vital to many of our people. Further, the island trade in fruit, &c., is valuable and well worthy of close attention.