

STATISTICAL AND SOCIAL INQUIRY SOCIETY OF IRELAND.

SCHEMES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF YOUTH IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LABOUR SERVICE.

By T. J. BEERE, M.A., LL.B.

(Read on Thursday, 15th December, 1938.)

Unemployment among young persons is one of the most acute and disturbing problems of this generation. It is difficult to assess its exact magnitude either in this or in other countries, but the International Labour Office concluded some years ago, from the mass of evidence at its disposal, that the number of unemployed persons under the age of 25 years is generally about a quarter of the total number of unemployed of all ages, and from the information available it appears that the proportion for Éire conforms closely to this figure, so that the number of unemployed youths between 16 and 25 years of age is in the neighbourhood of 20,000, of whom approximately 12,000 are under 21.

It is with the outlook and prospects of these "out of works" that we are at present concerned. The problem has been tackled in various ways in other countries and has been the subject of a Report of the International Labour Office.* The demoralising effects of unemployment on those who, full of youthful enthusiasm, are just entering upon adult life, is appreciated by every student of social conditions, and some means of alleviating this evil, with its trail of juvenile delinquency, is the subject of the present paper.

The provision of recreational centres and the extension of vocational education are steps in the right direction, and help to equip young persons to meet their future life, but they do not in any way adequately meet the situation. The idea of organised labour camps for productive activity is now a generally recognised contour on the relief map of most countries. The idea is not a new one and probably originated with the University Camps in which students spent open-air holidays on work of public usefulness. More recently, and with the growth of unemployment, labour service has become an emergency measure for the absorption of young unemployed on work of public utility, of such a nature that the economic or social life of the country is benefited. The projects selected are such that in the ordinary course of events they would not be undertaken at least for many years to come, and their execution is usually accompanied by recreational and educational

* International Labour Conference. Report III, 1935—Unemployment Among Young Persons.

activities. In a few countries (Germany and Bulgaria in particular) a period of labour service is compulsory and this may be said to assume the nature of additional military training rather than the alleviation of unemployment. The criticism that labour camps savour of militarism has frequently been made, but such criticism can only with justification be levelled at a system of compulsory labour service.

Another criticism which has been made is that this kind of work competes unfairly with adult labour in ordinary employment. For this reason it is essential that the projects are of such a nature that they would not be undertaken in the ordinary course of events. It is desirable that projects should be selected after consultation with Workers' Organisations, and that the work chosen should provide useful, practical or educational experience for the participants. The choice of camp leaders is also a matter of prime importance, for not only must they be possessed of the personality which makes the leader, but with this must be combined adequate technical knowledge and a wide practical experience.

Last year, in the United States, I was immensely impressed by the suntanned, healthy youths of the Civilian Conservation Corps—commonly known as the C.C.C. There could be no doubt that this great body of youth (all voluntary recruits) benefited enormously by the work camps, and the physique and general fitness of the youths was beyond question. As I watched a cheerful group at work clearing forest paths, etc., near one of the camps, I could not help comparing them with the unhappy youths of this country who can be seen any day supporting the walls of our cities and country towns.

So greatly was I impressed with the C.C.C. that I hoped to see something of the kindred organisations in Europe this year, and, with this object in view, selected Germany and Luxemburg, the former as an example of the compulsory form of service (as opposed to America's voluntary system) and Luxemburg as an example of how juvenile unemployment is dealt with in a small country. I regret that my good intentions were unavailing. First I visited Luxemburg, of whose land settlement schemes for young unemployed I had read. Great was my surprise to find that while the scheme existed on paper it had no existence in fact, as Luxemburg had just 18 persons unemployed! My visit to Germany coincided with the days of the Crisis. Arbeitsdienst camps were temporarily closed to visitors as the workers were (I was informed) occupied with harvesting operations.

I must, in consequence, apologise to the Society for the fact that this paper is based largely on second-hand information, but every endeavour has been made to check all facts either through diplomatic channels or from official publications. I am greatly indebted to the representatives of the various countries for the information placed at my disposal in response to a questionnaire. The list of countries selected is by no means exhaustive, but it is hoped that this brief account of some of the various measures adopted to deal with unemployment among young persons will have some interest for the members of this Society.

The United States has probably the most elaborate and highly-developed scheme of Voluntary Labour Service, but its large scale cost would render it impracticable for most other countries, especially those already burdened by unemployment. Of the smaller countries dealt with—Netherlands, Norway, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland—the last named has perhaps the most comprehensive and interesting

programme. Some account of the German Labour Service is also included as representative of a system of compulsory service. Great Britain has various training schemes and provides a certain number of residential centres; these, however, are not confined to youths but cater for men up to 45. The Canadian programme is only a year old but has already developed several interesting features.

United States of America.

In March, 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps was launched in the United States "to provide employment as well as vocational training for youthful citizens of the United States who are unemployed and in need of employment, through the performance of useful public works in connection with the conservation and development of the natural resources of the United States."

The work of the Civilian Conservation Corps is under the supervision of a Director with whom the various governmental agencies co-operate. For instance, recruiting is done through the Department of Labour; the War Department looks after transport, supplies, supervision of construction and administration of the camps, sanitation, medical care and welfare, etc.; the Departments of Agriculture and of the Interior supervise the technical details of such projects as afforestation and soil conservation and work on national parks and monuments.

The finances of the organisation have been on a very large scale, and in the four years 1933-1937, inclusive, the cost of the scheme (excluding purchase of land) came to \$1,662 million (approximately £332 million). Of this sum 31 per cent. was paid in wages to the enrollees, 18 per cent. was spent on subsistence and shelter, 16 per cent. on pay of civilian employees and Reserve officers, 13 per cent. on supplies, materials and equipment, 11 per cent. on clothing and the remainder on transport and other miscellaneous expenses. In these four years employment was given to approximately 1,700,000 enrollees and to some 300,000 other persons. The *average* strength of the C.C.C. in the earlier years was about 300,000 but this rose to a peak of over 500,000 in 1935, since when it has fallen again to the 300,000 level. The life of the organisation was extended in 1937 for a further period of three years with a maximum strength of 315,000, of whom 300,000 must be between 17 and 23 years of age. Actually experience has shown that half of the youths are 17-18 years and that three-quarters are under 21. A quarter have never had any previous employment.

When reckoning up the cost to the State it must not be overlooked that a great deal of indirect employment is also afforded in the production and distribution of supplies and equipment and that the work accomplished in developing the nation's resources is of immense and lasting economic value to the country as a whole. Further, of the \$513 million earned in cash allowances, only about one-fifth was retained by the enrollees themselves, the remainder being remitted to their families. The total cost per enrollee per annum is calculated at over £200.

Over 150 major types of work have been carried out at camps spread all over the United States; the major groups are: (1) forest culture, (2) forest protection, (3) erosion control, (4) flood control, irrigation and drainage, (5) transportation improvements, (6) structural improvements, (7) range development, (8) wild life, (9) landscape and recreation.

To see, even to read of the extraordinarily varied work is as inspiring

as tales of the old pioneering days, for these young men fight forest fires (about four million man days were spent in this way alone), they do battle against pests such as pine beetles and gypsy moths, they plant millions of young forest trees, build hatcheries and provide fish for the forest streams, reclaim and revegetate vast areas of land, prepare refuges for big game, sanctuaries for birds, and do hundreds of other important jobs.

Perhaps their work on park development and recreational areas has aroused the greatest nation-wide interest. In the vicinity of large and well populated towns "recreational demonstration areas" have been developed, which may be used for organised camping, etc., by the poorer children from the neighbourhood. Forty-six such areas were developed in the first four years of the Corps. In addition, hundreds of thousands of acres of new park lands have been opened up for recreational purposes, and existing facilities have been improved by the provision of camp grounds, fireplaces, shelters, swimming pools and scenic tracks.

There are nearly 2,000 camps in operation, though the number was considerably greater at the peak period. Each camp is composed of some half-dozen buildings, measuring about 50' x 20'. Four are used as barracks for the men, of whom there are 160 in each camp, and there are also quarters for officers and technical staff, dining-room and kitchen, recreation room, infirmary, and in some cases a school building, garages and tool sheds.

The camps are well cared for and the surroundings are pleasant. Each camp is in the charge of a Reserve Army Officer with a lieutenant to assist (though no military training or drill is permitted). There is, in addition, an educational adviser, a camp supervisor (usually an engineer or forester) and a number of "local experience men" selected from the vicinity of the camp, 6 per cent. of the men get an extra allowance for acting as leaders, and an additional 10 per cent. act as assistant leaders. The enrollees get \$30 a month, leaders \$45 and assistant leaders \$36, in addition to board, lodging, medical attention and clothing. Twenty-five dollars out of the thirty may be sent home to support the dependent members of their families, for enrollees had in the early years to come from families on relief, though since 1937 this is not an essential qualification. The enrollees must be unmarried, and must be unemployed. In the beginning the age limit was 18-25 years but this was altered first to 17-28 and later on to 17-23 years. Enrolment is voluntary and the period of camp life is at first 6 months but may be extended to 12 or 15 months and members may leave at any time to take up remunerative employment.

Camp life begins early—the reveille being sounded at 5.45 a.m. breakfast at 6.30, followed by bed-making, etc., morning inspection at 7.30, followed by the call to work. Dinner is at noon, and work stops for the day at 4 p.m. Classes and recreational activities fill the evening until 9 p.m. Lights out at 9.30. It is generally found that the enrollees benefit greatly by the good food and regular work (40 hours a week) and exercise, and from a sample enquiry it has been calculated that the average gain in weight in the first two months is over 6 lbs.

The educational work is very interesting, particularly in view of the fact that while participation is voluntary the great majority avail of some phase of the programme. Great stress is laid on the giving of systematic instruction on the actual work projects, and it is also possible, as the camps are self-contained, to give practical teaching in

motor mechanics, cooking, typing, etc. The educational programme aims at rendering the members more employable and in making them better citizens. The activities consequently are designed to meet the special needs, abilities and interests of the participants. Ordinary school subjects are taught, and classes in history, civics, etc., are very popular. The leisure time activities include handicrafts (leather work, metal work, wood carving, etc.), discussion groups, photography, gardening, first-aid classes, swimming, music, dramatic classes, etc. Books, newspapers and magazines, radios, etc., are provided, and various sports and games are organised.

Considerable difficulty has been found in obtaining the services of the right type of men as educational advisers, particularly as the salary offered is relatively small. Many who have the requisite knowledge have been found lacking in the personality which is essential for success in this kind of work. Education is becoming a more and more important feature of the life and camps are now equipped to offer each person enrolled at least ten hours' instruction and training per week, and it is also made possible for an enrollee to attend an educational institution of his choice on leave of absence from camp.

The religious aspect is not neglected and arrangements are made for the ministrations of chaplains and of the local clergy. Classes in religious instruction are provided for the members of the various religious denominations.

Generally speaking the C.C.C. has been considered the most popular Government project under the New Deal, and both industry and agriculture have shown a marked desire to employ C.C.C. boys. The following extract from a Report of the Department of Labour (the selecting agency) to the Director of the C.C.C. speaks for itself:—

“ The most dramatic accomplishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps to selecting agents and to the parents of the enrollees is undoubtedly the contrast between the uncertain inexperienced youths who leave their homes to begin work in C.C.C. camps and the physically sturdy, self-reliant young men who return after a year or more in camp, equipped with a background of work, experience and personal advancement. To an increasing extent the Corps has proved its usefulness in breaking the vicious circle which arises from the fact that youths just out of school are unable to obtain jobs without experience and are unable to obtain experience without jobs. The C.C.C. camps are, in most instances, providing the first work experience for young men who have been unable to find any remunerative employment since leaving school.”

Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, Voluntary Labour Camps for young unemployed men between the ages of 16 and 24 were first established in 1931. For the first years the camps were only for a few weeks' period and the chief purpose was recreational. In 1935 camps of eight weeks' duration were begun, which aimed at accustoming the participants to the exertion and to the developing influences of manual work.

The camps are organised by the Trade and Youth organisations, to whom the young men apply direct for admission, but control is exercised by the Department of Social Affairs. The type of labour consists of outdoor work in woods and nature reserves and in the building, maintenance and improvement of youth hostels. The workers

are paid directly f. 1.75 (4/-) per week of 40 hours. Seventy-five per cent. of the cost of the camps is borne by the Government while the remainder is contributed by the organising associations. In 1937 the money appropriated amounted to f. 500,000 (£57,000).

Camp organisers are generally leaders of youth or trade associations. Opportunities for educational instruction are provided, the matter of physical training being left to the camp organisers. Lectures are arranged and free time is largely devoted to reading, sports, games, singing, etc. Military training does not form a part of camp activities.

The number of participants of the long camps varies from 50-100, of the short camps from 10-50. During the year on an average 1,750 boys were in camp, and the total number of participants in the year was about 10,000.

No objections to the camps have been raised by trade union or kindred organisations, indeed these organisations co-operate directly with the work of the camps and the only difficulty encountered has been that of arousing the interest of the boys themselves.

The main object of the camps is to counter-balance the demoralising influences of unemployment, and to give fresh courage and energy for life.

Norway.

Camps for unemployed young men, aged 18-24, have been organised in Norway since 1933. At first the camps were privately controlled, with some State support, but in 1935-36 special work camps for unemployed were established under the Ministry for Social Affairs, but directed by Local Committees. Recruitment to the camps is conducted by the Ministry through the Local Branch Employment offices, the unemployed being recruited from the areas where unemployment is greatest. Participation in camps is entirely voluntary and the duration of stay is usually limited to one working season, from spring to autumn. The work undertaken has been largely the building of roads in undeveloped districts, land drainage, and opening up of paths to secure access to mountain plateaux capable of being utilised as pastoral or agricultural land.

Workers are provided with free accommodation but are required to buy their own food, the State contributing towards the cost of cooking. Work is paid for at time rates, 45 ore per hour (approximately 4½d.), or Contract work is paid at the rate of 5 krone (5/-) per day, with increase at harvest time, and half the wages are retained for the workers until time of departure. The camps are financed from the Emergency Funds of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the cost in 1936 amounting to 650,000 kr. (£32,500). The average number of persons in camps is about 500, or about 50 per centre. The camp organisers are drawn from various occupational groups, such as teachers, engineers, technical experts, agricultural students, etc., and they would appear to have made a success of their work as no difficulties have been encountered in the maintenance of discipline nor have any objections been raised by organised labour or other bodies.

In addition to the regular work in camp, courses of instruction are sometimes given in various subjects including language, mathematics, etc. Military training does not form a part of camp life but there are facilities for sport and the camp committees are enabled to obtain

sports requisites at State cost. All workers at camp are insured against sickness and accident and so have free medical and dental treatment, and medicines and first-aid requisites are provided.

The authorities in Norway intend to continue the camps so long as unemployment remains a problem. Though the camps do not ensure permanent employment for workers they have a useful disciplinary effect and the systematic work is believed to lead to a general improvement in health.

Czechoslovakia.

Voluntary Labour Camps for unemployed young men between the ages of 18 and 24 have been organised and administered by the State under the direction of the Ministry of Social Welfare, each camp having its own administrative council. Two such camps were equipped as an experiment, one in Bohemia and one in Slovakia, and were opened in 1934, each for about 4 months, with a membership of 87 and 140 respectively, the camp in Slovakia was tried out again in 1935.

The members of these camps were employed in public construction work in the neighbourhood of the camps at regular wages and under regular working conditions. The wages of the combined effort were turned over to the camp treasury and after payment of current expenses the balance was divided among the members at the closing of the camp. The camps were self-supporting and the Ministry of Social Welfare only subscribed in a small measure by paying certain items which could not be met from camp funds.

The members of the camps worked 30 hours per week and leisure time was devoted to music, lectures, dramatic and educational evenings, which were organised in special circles and groups. There were also physical exercises and sports to occupy free time and the men's health was looked after through a system of regular medical inspections.

The camps, it was found, did not altogether fulfil the purpose for which they were set up and there was an apparent lack of interest amongst the unemployed, which led to their discontinuance.

Considerable attention has been paid in Czechoslovakia to shelters for youths, which have been established with success. At first the shelters only provided accommodation during the winter months, but later they were also made available during the summer, and are more or less community clubs for young unemployed. Work is found for the youths in the form of constructional undertakings provided by some public body in co-operation with the council administering the shelter. The cost of the work is partly paid by contributions towards wages made by the Ministry for Social Welfare from an unemployment fund. Such moneys are paid in proportion to the numbers employed and the duration of the work. The employers hand over to the management of the shelter the wages due for whatever work has been done and, as in the case of the camps, the management use the money to cover running expenses, any surplus being distributed in cash to those taking part. The Ministry also finances educational facilities for the shelters.

Switzerland.

Since 1925 voluntary student labour camps have been organised in Switzerland to aid the mountain dwellers, but it was not till 1932 that

camps for the unemployed were inaugurated. The work of the various bodies dealing with employment centres for young unemployed persons is co-ordinated in the Swiss Association for the Voluntary Labour Service. The camps cater for youths from 16 to 24 years of age, though provision is also made for older single men with no fixed residence, in whose case no age limit applies. The period of attendance is usually three months, but must not exceed six months in any one year, and attendance is voluntary. Recruitment to camps is done through local employment offices, but propaganda work by means of films, etc., is also carried on.

The work projects undertaken must have some economic or cultural worth and must not compete unduly with private undertakings. They are selected on the principle that they will confer some benefits on the general community and that they would not be undertaken in the ordinary course of events. The principal works have been the making of forest and mountain paths, work in connection with forestry and rivers, making good damage done by storms, establishment of youth hostels and holiday homes, archaeological excavations, restoration of ancient ruins, improvement of peasant homes, all kinds of agricultural work, together with special training in agriculture.

The participants in the camps are provided with free board and lodging, working clothes, transport expenses, insurance against accident and sickness, together with weekly pocket money of fr. 6 (group leaders getting up to fr. 12), which is paid direct to the workers. They are not eligible for unemployment benefit or relief while in camp, but time so spent is reckoned as time worked for the purpose of the establishment of the right to benefit, and they must remain registered with a public employment exchange while in camp.

Under a Federal Order of December, 1934, the Central Employment office is authorised to subsidise the voluntary labour service and to supervise all work carried out by it.

The cost of camps (exclusive of building materials and tools) is borne, 40 per cent. by the Federal Government, 40 per cent. by the Canton or municipalities (if the work is not actually undertaken by them) and 20 per cent. by those on whose behalf work is done. The assistance of the Government, Cantons and municipalities is usually financed out of a special credit for the purpose of fighting unemployment. The costs of building materials, tools and implements (all of Swiss manufacture) are, as a rule, borne by those on whose behalf the work is undertaken. The amount expended by the Central Government in 1936 came to fr. 717,000 and the total average cost from all sources per head per day amounted to fr. 4.86 (about 5/-).

Each camp is supervised by a leader, with a technical assistant. Unemployed technical workers are attached to the management of camps whenever practicable. Camp leaders are selected from various classes and professions so long as they have the necessary qualifications, generally it is desirable that they shall have taken part voluntarily in some form of labour service and have qualified as group leaders or helpers. Special training courses have been provided for camp leaders.

General instruction is given in spare time and in bad weather. Where facilities for professional or technical training exist near the camps, members may spend 12 hours each week of the 48-hour working week in such occupations. Physical training plays an important part and, as a rule, there are physical exercises before breakfast and sports

in leisure time. There is no military training, and camps are strictly non-political.

A special employment service is not maintained in connection with the camps but as the participants are recruited through the local employment offices, they are recognised as looking for work and work is obtained for them as quickly as possible. It is also the duty of the camp leaders to make special efforts to place the members in suitable employment. After a minimum of two months uninterrupted satisfactory service, a special certificate is issued and the official employment offices are directed, other things being equal, to give priority in filling vacancies to the holders of these certificates.

The numbers in a camp vary according to the magnitude and description of the work, between 15-70 men, usually about 30-40. The average number in camps in 1936 was 1,050, with 1,600 as a maximum in the summer.

In the early stages some objections were raised by trade unions but they now take a neutral attitude, rather passive than active.

The greatest difficulties encountered have been in interesting the young unemployed, and in finding suitable work projects, particularly in winter owing to climatic conditions.

The camps have been found of great benefit, physically, morally and materially. They have roused the apathetic and despondent and given them renewed joy in work and good comradeship. Skill and ability which would otherwise be lost is restored, and much worth-while work has been accomplished. Work camps for young unemployed are a temporary measure to meet a period of necessity but the camps for older homeless men are a more permanent feature of Swiss social service.

The following figures show the growth of the organisation in Switzerland:—

Year	No. of Camps.	Participants.	Days of Work.	Cost of Camps. Fr.	Total Cost of Scheme. Fr.
1933	30	980	51,985	237,397	264,640
1934	62	2,526	131,074	638,804	726,419
1935	95	4,651	258,561	1,256,989	1,532,792
1936	116	5,563	344,740	1,671,626	1,941,413

German Arbeitsdienst.

As early as 1925 the first labour camps were organised by students in youth organisations who appreciated the benefits of manual work on the land and the importance of gathering together under one roof those of different classes and from different surroundings. Voluntary labour service was introduced by a Legislative Decree in 1931 and the bodies which had previously organised camps (youth organisations, religious or charitable bodies, etc.) were replaced by the National Socialist Party, which assumed full responsibility for the organisation of the labour service. By 1933 the movement was recognised as a national institution and labour service became a "duty of honour" for German Youth. A period of compulsory labour service was adopted for all young men in 1935.

The German word "Arbeitsdienst" means, literally, "Labour Service", and the concept of the movement in Germany is that it is everyone's duty to serve the state with his work, for a period of time.

The work projects are selected as furthering the common welfare and benefiting not only the present but future generations. The principal work is improvement and drainage of land, and reclamation of wasteland. In the period 1933-36, 70 per cent. of all the work done was in the reclamation of land for agriculture, 15 per cent. afforestation and 15 per cent. preparation work for establishment of farm settlements, improvement of dykes, etc. In the earlier years when the movement was voluntary only 16 per cent. of the work was on farms and over 30 per cent. was on play-grounds and other such amenities. It is estimated in Germany that the land reclamation work will occupy the labour service for the next twenty years, during which time the agricultural output will yield each year a surplus sufficient to provide food for another quarter of a million persons.

The camps provide a simple healthy life in the fresh air, wholesome food and regular hours. They provide the workers with clothing, food and lodging and pocket money of 25 pfennig a day (5d.).

The working day in camp begins at 5 a.m. (winter, 6 a.m.) with 10 minutes physical exercise; an hour is allowed for dressing, bed-making and an early breakfast. The working day is seven hours including thirty minutes for breakfast, dinner is at 1.30 (winter, 2.30), and in summer an hour's rest is provided after dinner. Games, sports and marching exercise occupy the afternoon, and there is daily instruction in home politics, German history, political problems, etc. Supper at 7 p.m. is followed by community singing, lectures, etc. Lights out at 10 p.m.

The aim of breaking down barriers of class and creed by a term of compulsory manual labour for all is probably realised, though at the expense, we would consider, of individuality and freedom of action. Labour service provides a training ground for the citizens of the State, while at the same time it is admittedly a valuable instrument of economic development. The original object of labour camps, as a remedy for unemployment, is no longer the main object in Germany, where the camps are now used as schools of social and political education. In general, so far as the outsider can ascertain, the young Germans look upon their period of camp service much as Irish boys look on a term of school or college, many indeed appear to enjoy the time.

The period of service is six months, and this usually precedes military service. Boys go to camps between 18-25 years of age, the later age allowing postponement for reasons of an occupational nature. Boys from the country are taken during the winter months so as not to interfere with harvesting operations, while city boys are drafted to the country to help on the farms in summer.

The Reich Directorate of the Labour Service is divided into eight sections which deal with (1) Service (organisation, registration, etc.); (2) Staff (Labour Service Leaders); (3) Planning (Finance and technical details); (4) Education, training and sport; (5) Administration and Business (salaries, clothing, maintenance, etc.); (6) Health and medical services; (7) Judicial Administration; (8) Press.

The territorial division is into 30 regions, with 4-8 groups in each and 5-10 camps in each group. In 1937 there were 1,310 camps, with an average of 200 in each. The Reich assumes full financial responsibility at a total annual cost of 200 million RM. (about £16½ million). The cost of daily board is about 85 pfennig (1/5) a head. Leaders

are chosen from among the camp workers by reason of their personality, efficiency, etc.; they receive a special course of training and become regular Government officials.

Great Britain.

Instructional centres and certain similar schemes in Great Britain are under the management of the Ministry of Labour, and provide training for men from 18-45 years, though the number of married men and of men over 35 is limited.

The following is an account of the schemes for adult unemployed men, which has kindly been supplied to me by the Ministry of Labour.

Government Training Centres.

There are fourteen Government Training Centres, with a capacity of about 7,600 places at any one time.

A six months' intensive course is given in a specific trade, which, while not producing a fully skilled craftsman, enables those who complete it to take employment at a wage sufficient to maintain them until experience gained while working qualifies them for the full rate. Recruitment is voluntary. Men live in lodgings near the Centres, and receive the unemployment benefit or assistance (with dependant's allowances) to which they would ordinarily be entitled if unemployed. The cost of lodging is fixed, so as to leave 5/- a week pocket-money.

During 1937, of 10,761 men who completed the course, 10,424 or 97 per cent. went into employment.

Special Schemes.

The Ministry of Labour assist certain voluntary organisations which train youths from the Depressed and Special Areas as handymen, footmen, barmen, cooks, etc. The total number of men dealt with during 1937 was 1,088 of whom almost all proceeded to employment.

Instructional Centres.

There are twenty residential and four non-residential Centres, with about 200 places at each Centre. In the summer, camps are opened as annexes to some of the Centres. They provide a twelve weeks' course intended to restore the employability of men who have been long out of work. Graded tasks, mainly of the "pick and shovel" kind, build up their physique, while a certain amount of carpentry and metal-work adds to their capacities as labourers. Men live in hutments at the Centres, and receive their unemployment benefit or assistance (including allowances for dependants) out of which a fixed sum is deducted for maintenance leaving them 2/- a week pocket-money. Recruitment is voluntary. During 1937, 15,160 men passed through the Centres, and of these 3,474 obtained employment either directly or after transfer, or proceeded to other training schemes leading to employment. The Ministry of Labour Vote for these Schemes amounted to £239,000 for 1937.

Local Training and Preparatory Centres.

These are intended for the men who are unwilling or unable (for medical reasons) to go to Centres away from their home districts. They provide a short course both as a trial, from the men's point of view, and a test from the point of view of the Ministry, of whether they would benefit by further training.

Physical Training Classes.

These classes, conducted by the Ministry mainly in the Special Areas, give courses of exercises to unemployed men who volunteer to attend, which are designed to restore and maintain their physical fitness. It has been found that employers prefer men who have been members of a physical training class, and in 1937 of 20,911 who attended, 13,337 or 64 per cent. left to take employment.

In Great Britain, in addition to the organisations controlled by the Ministry of Labour, there are a number of private undertakings such as the Liverpool Voluntary Occupational Centres and the Universities' Council for Unemployed Camps. These camps are financed mainly by voluntary contributions and provide unemployed men with a few weeks of healthy holiday towards which they usually make a small contribution. University men share in the camps and take part in the work (excavation, etc.) and in the organised sports. Arrangements are made with the Local Exchanges so that the position of the unemployed men with regard to unemployment benefit is not affected by their going to camp.

The Royal Commission on Unemployment, 1932, suggested that use should be made of the great reserve of unemployed labour and that the workers would "have the satisfaction of giving some return for the money expended on their maintenance." The kind of work suggested was on parks and pleasure grounds and in service of non-profit making institutions, hospitals, etc., the period of work to be apportioned to correspond to the amount of unemployment benefit paid. The Commission recommended that work should be voluntary, but saw no objection to compulsion after the resources of commercial employment and voluntary service were exhausted.

The efforts of the Ministry of Labour have not passed without criticism and it is well to recognise the opposing points of view. Wal Hannington, for instance, in "The Problem of the Depressed Areas" describes Labour Service as "Slave Camps," and writes:—

"I regard the compulsion of the Unemployed to work without wages as presenting a problem which calls not only for action from the Unemployed but from the organised Labour movements in general. We must resist any scheme which has the effect of declassing the Unemployed. When work is available, whether it be for a private employer or for the Government, the Unemployed should be entitled to receive the proper payment for that work and so be restored to their normal position of wage earners."

Criticism appears to be mainly directed against instructional centres for older men, and Hannington recommends them for juveniles, so long as they provide proper training which will fit youth for a trade, and that provision is made for trade union supervision in the training centres.

Canada.

In 1937 a new vote of \$1,000,000 was provided by the Federal Government for developing training projects for unemployed young persons. A certain proportion of the grant was allocated to each province, the amounts to be expended under agreement whereby the Federal and Provincial Governments each provided an equal contribution towards specific training projects. The grant was designed especially to assist young unemployed persons, between the ages of

18 and 30, who having finished school were without work and were obliged to seek it under the most unfavourable conditions.

The programme included four categories of projects :—

- (1) Training projects of an educational nature.
- (2) Learnership courses in industry.
- (3) Work projects to combine training with conservation and development of natural resources, and
- (4) Physical training programmes to maintain health and morale.

The special kinds of training are selected according to the needs of the different provinces and the training projects are related as nearly as possible to the basic industries of the district where unemployment exists

The following are among the various types of projects which have been undertaken in Canada, and which have been described in various issues of the *Labour Gazette* of the Canadian Department of Labour :—

1. *Training in Agricultural Subjects.* Suitable courses were made available by co-operation with the Universities and the Department of Agriculture. In some cases young men were placed with carefully selected experienced farmers for training, the farmers being paid and the apprentices also being given training allowances.

2. *Training in Forestry Conservation, Mining, Surveying and Prospecting.*

3. *Industrial Training.* In some provinces plans were made to assist in the training of apprentices and learners in industry, sometimes through special courses of instruction, while at other times the employers are relieved of the cost of instruction through money payments, but no subsidy is paid to productive wages. In Ontario, for example, at least 60 per cent. of the combined wage and instruction allowance of the learner is paid by the employer. The organisation of this kind of arrangement called for special officers to canvas employers.

4. *Health and Physical Education Training,* including recreational activities, especially in urban areas.

5. *Household Economics.* House craft and handicraft for women, usually in residential domestic training schools, giving a three months' course.

6. *Occupational activities* and special courses of a varied nature including carpentry; blacksmithing; repair of farm machinery; curing, processing, packing and marketing fish; navigation and seamanship, etc.

Particular attention is paid to vocational guidance so that young people may have an opportunity of being trained in work for which they have some aptitude and in which there is some hope of employment. Recruits are selected from amongst the most needy but selection must be made without discrimination as to race, religion or politics. Particular emphasis is laid on the necessity of obtaining suitable employment for those who have satisfactorily completed a course of training and a free registration and placement service is maintained. In some cases those leaving to take up employment are given a special clothing bonus.

Whenever possible existing facilities (technical schools, etc.) are utilised, in other cases suitable boarding camps are provided. Every effort is made to secure local co-operation, both public and private, and the necessity for preventing over-crowding in individual trades is carefully borne in mind. Before establishing industrial classes the

trade unions concerned are consulted. Where young people attend courses of instruction away from home they receive a living allowance. The administration of the projects differs somewhat between province and province, but in Manitoba, for example, an eight-hour day and a 44-hour week is the general rule and all persons employed on the projects are paid in accordance with provincial "fair wage" rates.

At the end of last year about 16,000 young persons had already undergone training under the Dominion and provincial programme. The scheme is reported to have been very successful and the programme is to be further extended, the sum included in the estimates being increased to \$2,250,000 for training projects for unemployed young persons and older unemployed persons. The provinces are reported as enthusiastic about the methods adopted for the training and rehabilitation of the young unemployed. The provincial administration is carried out by various Departments, including Agriculture, Labour, Education, and Trade and Commerce.

Conclusions.

Labour Service Camps have had a trial in recent years in a number of countries and the results achieved appear to have been excellent. The following are some of the conclusions which may be drawn from a consideration of the experience of other countries:—

1. Attendance at camps and centres for young unemployed should be voluntary in any democratic community. There is no valid reason for compulsion to be placed on one section of the population—namely, the unemployed.

2. Camps should be strictly non-political. In one or two countries they have undoubtedly been used as schools of political thought. This is neither an inevitable nor a desirable development of the organisation and is expressly guarded against in most countries.

3. Camps should be confined to young unemployed, unmarried men, preferably between the ages of 16 and 25 years.

4. Work projects should only be selected after careful consideration. They should be of such a nature that they will not disturb the open labour market, they should have some educational value, they should benefit the nation economically, socially or culturally, and the cost of materials must not be excessive. Schemes of work suggested as particularly suitable are as follows:—

- (a) Planting of trees and laying of parks in the areas of cities and towns.
- (b) Providing recreational facilities for workers—ball alleys, swimming pools, etc.
- (c) Construction of new buildings and conversion of old buildings suitable for holiday homes for workers, youth hostels, etc., as has been done in the Netherlands and Switzerland.

5. Labour Service should not become an excuse for the performance of public works by means of the cheapest labour and the training and rehabilitation of youth should be the primary consideration. Hours of work should be limited and attendance at courses in physical education, hygiene and civics should be compulsory, while educational facilities should be provided either at local technical schools or at the camps. Regular sports, athletics and other recreations should be organised and lobbies and games encouraged. While participants must necessarily

be amenable to reasonable discipline, any semblance of military training should be avoided.

6. Camps should be self-contained, and all work should be performed by the participants, thus widening the scope for practical training. Participants should build and equip camps, cook, clean and garden. They could do any necessary secretarial work, carry out repairs to machinery, vehicles, etc. A strong spirit of co-operation should be encouraged, initiative should be welcomed and each participant should be helped to think of himself not as "one of the unemployed" but as one who has the advantage of a special preparation for employment. The issue of certificates of competence (as in Switzerland) to those who complete a course satisfactorily is to be recommended.

7. Recruiting methods should have a popular appeal—making use of radio, films, etc. Welfare committees and religious, vocational and technical bodies should be invited to co-operate in selecting suitable candidates. So long as candidates are only chosen by employment exchanges there is likely to be a suspicious or grudging response from young people and without their co-operation any voluntary scheme of labour service is doomed to failure.

8. Duration of stay should not be less than three months as a shorter period is unlikely to have much influence in the forming of regular habits or in improvement of health and physique; the maximum period might be a year. Camps should be limited to reasonable proportions—between 25-50 persons.

9. Residential centres are preferable, so that participants may experience some of the influences of community life and may be removed for a short time from depressing home surroundings. Camps should be located in country districts—town dwellers will benefit in mind and body from country life, while there is no excuse for encouraging the drift from the land.

10. Participants should be provided with food, shelter, clothing, travelling expenses and health services. They should also receive a money allowance. The financial arrangements vary from one country to another. For instance, in Switzerland the Central Government supplies 40 per cent. of the cost as compared with 75 per cent. in the Netherlands, and 100 per cent. in the U.S.A., Norway and Germany. The workers are paid in addition to maintenance about 28/- a week per head in the United States, 6/- a week in Switzerland, 4/- in the Netherlands, and 3/- in Germany. At Instructional Centres in Great Britain they get unemployment benefit or assistance, out of which a fixed sum is deducted for maintenance, leaving them 2/- a week pocket-money. The total cost of the scheme per head per annum also varies widely being, roughly, £200 in the United States, £90 in Switzerland, £65 in Germany, £65 in Norway, and £45 in the Netherlands. Against these totals the saving on other relief measures and the value of the work done must be taken into account.

11. In some countries Labour Service is exclusively under Governmental control (as Germany, U.S.A.), while in other countries, as Switzerland, the Netherlands, it is organised by voluntary organisations (Trade, Youth, Religious and Philanthropic bodies) but usually under Governmental supervision. The co-operation of welfare and educational bodies, and of the trade unions appears highly desirable.

12. The choice of leaders is of great importance as on their efforts the results must largely depend. They must combine personality with adequate technical knowledge and a wide experience. The practice

in different countries varies. In Germany, leaders are especially selected and trained; in the United States each camp has an army officer in charge, who is assisted by a technical expert and an educational adviser. In other countries youth leaders, teachers, engineers, agricultural students, social workers, etc., are employed in this work.

13. A placement and follow-up service is desirable. This usually meets with success as employers are more anxious to employ those who have made good use of their term of unemployment. Leaders in camps are in a unique position to study the aptitude of the various workers for different kinds of work and to advise and help them accordingly.

DISCUSSION ON MISS BEERE'S PAPER.

GENERAL MULCAHY said it gave him great pleasure to propose a vote of thanks to Miss Beere. Her paper contained a great deal of interesting and stimulating information. When this was found sandwiched in between the statement that there were 20,000 unemployed youths between the ages of 16 and 25 in this country, and the series of conclusions come to by Miss Beere, it inevitably brought them to question whether the methods described could be used to deal with our own youth unemployment problem. When they did so, they were met by serious disappointment. In proportion to our population we did here the equivalent of what is shown to have been done in the Netherlands. We would give a year's occupation and training to not more than 600 youths at a cost of £27,000. The Norwegian equivalent here would be 525 youths, at a cost of £33,000, and the Swiss equivalent 760 at a cost of £67,400.

He did not think the German or United States experience could serve us in any way, directly. The location of our unemployed, the location of opportunities for suitable works, and the presence of suitable local administrative machinery, made it easy to deal here with a large amount of constructive relief work without the more spectacular organisation of Workers' Corps. It would probably be found that since 1923 we had been doing proportionally more through the machinery of Local Government bodies, Board of Works, Land Commission, than the United States were doing through the C.C.C., in spite of any spectacular look of some of that work. In Great Britain, the impulse underlying the organisation of their training centres and camps seemed to come entirely from the Distressed Areas problem. The achievement there did not appear to be very great.

It was not easy to size up the situation in rural districts here. Complaints that existed about the difficulty of farmers getting labourers could not be quite harmonised with the figures for rural unemployment. In the city of Dublin, however, there were about 5,000 unemployed youths between the ages of 16 and 25 years. It would be worth while getting that position fully examined, with a view to seeing what solution might be applied. There was a scheme of apprentices approved by the Trades Unions in relation to the Air Corps. Boys served a two years' apprenticeship, then gave seven years Army Service. They were fully trained as craftsmen. With advantage to the Army this scheme could be extended to the Engineering Corps and the Ordinance Corps. The period of Army Service could be shortened to three years, and fully qualified technical workers could thus be discharged into the industrial world at the age of 24 years or 25. A scheme by which unemployed youths registered at the employment exchanges would be conducted in groups to see the operation of some of Dublin's principal industries would serve to widen their outlook, improve their morale, and increase their chance of making contacts which would result in employment. It will be found that any solution of the problem will have to be piece-meal.

THE REV. J. E. CANAVAN, S.J., seconding the vote of thanks, said the paper read by Miss Beere was a stimulating one, and it directed attention to what was the most urgent social problem of their time. Unemployment had always existed, but in their present civilisation it had extended to enormous proportions. One of the reasons for that position of affairs was that certain political views were held about

political liberty which made them reluctant to force men to work. Another difficulty was the inter-relationship between countries both economically and financially. They were reluctant to force men to do work that they did not wish to do, and he wondered if they would have to awaken and examine closely what was meant by "compulsion" and "permissive". If a man would not work they had to take the responsibility of putting him on the "dole". He did not see any degradation in young men of all classes between 15 and 25 years having to work. What was degrading about being compelled to work? Young men were compelled to join an army in a conscript country during the war. Work was absolutely essential for formation of character.

In Germany and other countries before the war every young man had to go first to a national school. In Ireland the policy was to segregate their children instead of being forced to send them to the national schools before sending them to universities. In that way they would get real democracy. There were certain points in favour of labour camps which were put aside without consideration. They were dealing with young unmarried men, who had not formed character and who might deteriorate if left in idleness. Labour camps would have certain educational influence on such men, notwithstanding that some leaders had termed such camps "slave camps". It really was compulsion in a democratic country, that if a man refused to do relief work he was deprived of the "dole". They, therefore, should not be too chary about compulsion as they were having it decidedly and drastically used in their country. There was not in relief schemes as much prospect of character building as in labour camps. The cost of the schemes was very high. Boys leaving technical schools would learn much if sent to labour camps. At the present time technical school boys were absolutely incompetent, and they could not do anything except write badly and read a book. As to manual work they were entirely incompetent. What was required was getting into touch with mother earth in this matter and producing something tangible.

Labour camps would also encourage citizenship and comradeship, which was missed by relief works. There was another aspect of the question, which could be solved by voluntary organisation. In that connection he would like to hear a paper on the activities of Mount Street Club, in which men were given a choice of occupation. There was, he understood, sympathetic discrimination in the club, which also seemed to have developed leaders. To develop their country leaders were needed. Leaders would not be got through relief schemes; they might be got through the medium of a labour camp or the voluntary system and, in addition, the cost was low. The Civil Service would expend £15,000 to run an organisation like Mount Street Club, which the club itself would run for £1,020. They, in Éire, would have to solve their own unemployment problem, they had the brains and there was no need to go to Norway or other countries for a solution. The unemployed were the scalding menace of our time, and something would have to be done for them.

MR. L. J. DUFFY said that in her excellent paper, Miss Beere was particularly informative in regard to a subject which had not received in this country the attention it demanded. Nobody would quarrel with her conclusions; they were distinguished by a sound understanding of the problem and were immediately practicable.

Unemployment amongst young persons, he continued, was far more

serious in its consequences than was generally realised. Hundreds of children leaving the schools each year—both secondary and primary schools—were unable to secure jobs, and many additional hundreds could only find work in blind-alley employment. Consequently, a considerable number of young people who normally should be undergoing specialised training were idling around the streets without any prospect of being able to fit themselves into our economic system in the future.

There was a matter, he said, in connection with juvenile employment which was really serious for a very large proportion of boys and girls who had actually entered industrial and commercial employment—that is, they have no guarantee of constant work.

Continuing, Mr. Duffy said he was strongly in favour of a scheme to provide training centres which would give young people, say between the ages of 17 and 25 a new outlook on life, fit them for employment in trades or avocations in which they were likely to find openings later on, but above all that would remove them from the dispiriting atmosphere of the street corner. He thought, however, that any scheme for this purpose should be undertaken by a Department of Social Welfare rather than by the Employment Exchange, and that it should be organised in consultation with the trade unions.

Mr. Duffy said in conclusion that recruitment for the purpose of the scheme should be on a voluntary basis, and that in the main it ought to aim at the training and vocational guidance of young people between the ages of 17 and 25, it should cultivate discipline and provide a reasonable amount of cultural education. Care would have to be taken, of course, that any work performed as part of the scheme would not be competitive in the sense that it would throw other workers out of their employment.

MR J. R. CLARK said he did not think compulsion would be necessary to get unemployed youths to attend camps. Miss Beere, he added, did not make any reference to the unemployed young women in her paper.

MR. T. FORBES said he fully agreed with all Miss Beere's conclusions in the paper and in particular that which suggested labour camps should be non-political. He submitted that they should be thoroughly national. The problem which confronted them in respect of finding employment for young people was their lack of skill. The only craftsmen, which their Borstal institutions and reformatories could turn out were bootmakers, tailors and barbers. In that matter, he suggested the trades unions might be open to blame. There was a crying need for reform in their alleged reformatories. Mr. Forbes expressed himself in support of a voluntary system arranged through the medium of universities.

COMMANDER COOTE disliked the title "Labour Camp" and suggested "National Service Corps". He was completely optimistic about starting such an organisation, and considered that it should eventually include everyone between the ages of 18 and 25.

Great care would be needed at first to restore the broken "morale" of the unemployed young-adults, who were suffering from lack of food, loss of activity as well as loss of energy.

The comradeship and happiness that would result from a properly organised "National Service Corps" would be an incalculable benefit in breaking down distinctions, as well as in counteracting the degrada-

tion and loss of "moralc", due to enforced idleness through unemployment.

The establishment of a "Ministry of Social Welfare" would seem to be the first essential.

SENATOR JOHNSTON said he was tremendously impressed by the economy of providing relief for the unemployed through labour camps, and it was obvious that the money spent was likely to go further than if it were disbursed in small sums to individual employees. On the basis of the German system it was possible that Éire would be able to provide for 30,000 young people at a cost of £1½ millions annually, which was reasonable expenditure, compared with that being spent in the relief of unemployment without any return in labour. He was very pleased to learn from Mr. Duffy that he did not think it would be necessary to use such compulsory powers as obtained in Germany. Afforestation and drainage were necessary projects which if properly organised offered abundant and useful occupations.

THE PRESIDENT, before putting the vote of thanks to Miss Beere, which was passed with acclamation, said the only observation he had to make on the paper was in regard to the reference to the health of the youth population. He quoted an extract from an address recently delivered by Lord Dawson of Penn before the Council of the British Medical Association. In that address Lord Dawson said: "Let there be prescribed for every youth in the country between the ages of say, 17 and 19, a period of six months' training for citizenship. Such a policy would produce results of immense benefit. Located largely in camps, they would have right food, useful labour, education of body and mind, varied recreation and would learn self-government and enjoy a community life. They would go forth possessed of stature and strength having found each his purpose and with health abounding. This would be a rock-bottom investment for the nation's future." Those words of Lord Dawson of Penn, added the President, were important and emphasised one of the points to which Miss Beere's paper drew particular attention. He congratulated Miss Beere on her excellent address and on the useful discussion it had provoked.

MISS BEERE returned thanks for the references made by the speakers to her paper. In regard to General Mulcahy's remarks as to the slow advance made by labour camps in the various countries, Miss Beere said she thought the reason would be found in the fact that the camps were purely experimental and in most countries only began in 1934, so that her figures only dealt with the period up to 1936. She did not think that there was a shortage of suitable schemes: in fact there were so many projects that could be undertaken for labour service that it would be difficult to choose between them. The forthcoming tourist industry legislation would provide projects that might be worthy of consideration in that connection. She did not consider it would be necessary to have compulsory measures taken and was of the opinion that if the imagination of the youth was inspired by radio, films, etc., there would be such a number of recruits that they could not all be dealt with.