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**APPRENTICESHIP IN IRELAND:**

**AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.**

by

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## Chapter One

### THE ORIGINS OF APPRENTICESHIP

#### The Bible and the Talmud:

In his work, The Ancient Irish Laws, M. J. MacAuliffe posits:

the fatuity of endeavouring to describe absolute beginnings, such is beyond our power, we merely have to take sets of circumstances in whatever state of advancement we find them and note their subsequent development, progress or decay - (1)

Adopting this approach, one might begin with Chapter 4 of the Book of Genesis which details the birth, trade and religion of Cain and Abel. It records that Zillah, one of the two wives of Lamech, a great, great, great grandson of Cain, bore a son, Tubal-Cain, 'an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron' (2). Ecclesiasticus says of 'every craftsman and master workman'; the ploughman, the engraver, the smith and the potter:

All these rely upon their hands, and each is skilful in his own work. Without them a city cannot be established, and men can neither sojourn nor live there. .... But they keep stable the fabric of the world and their prayer is in the practice of their trade.(3)

In the Talmud, the fundamental code of Jewish civil and canon law, made up of the Misnah, the oral law, and the Gemara which complements and comments on the Misnah, the responsibility is

placed on every father to teach his son a trade. The Talmud says:

As it is your duty to teach your son the law so it is your duty to teach your son a trade. He who does not have his son taught a trade teaches him to be a robber.

The Jewish system entailed practice for the son in learning his father's handicraft in the evening while attending the Rabbis' school in the morning - an ancient counterpart of the modern day release of apprentices for education. The laws of the Misnah, like the Brehon Laws, were originally in oral form and were edited and worked into shape in the Academies of Palestine and of Babylon between 200 and 500 A.D.

For Christendom the Bible is a sacred document containing the word of God. While much of its content would nowadays be regarded as allegorical, over the centuries Christians believed that everything contained in it was literally true. Craftsmanship, therefore, was held in high regard as something which gave glory to God - 'their prayer is in the practice of their trade', - as Ecclesiasticus puts it. The Talmud, on the other hand, was the legal code, both civil and ecclesiastical, of the Jews, placing the obligation, legal and moral, on the father to have his son taught a trade. If a father for some reason was unable to teach his son a trade, was he not, therefore, under the Talmud, required to have him taught by someone else, perhaps a trade different from his own? Is this where the concept of apprenticeship developed - where a young person was bound (Latin - appraehendere - to lay hold of) by his father to another person for a period of time to learn a trade, originally for a fee? Sir Henry Maine, in his book, Ancient Law, makes the point that 'The members of the same family ..... are wholly incapable of contracting with each other'.(4) While this is not the position under our present

legal code, nevertheless there are special conditions laid down in relation to 'infants' (persons under 18 years of age) entering into legally enforceable contracts. Perhaps, therefore, in the strict sense, a real apprenticeship only existed when the young person was bound to someone else.

### Early Apprenticeship Contracts:

On display in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, is a small, grey, unbaked clay tablet. It comes from the Berens Collection of Babylonian Tablets. It is 45.5 mm. high by 56 mm. wide and has 10 lines of late Babylonian writing on each of the obverse, reverse and edge panels. (see Figure 1). This tablet is, in fact, an apprenticeship contract which dates from about 628 B.C. In the Asiatic Society Monograph, Vol. XVI - The Babylonian Tablets of the Berens Collection by T. G. Pinches (5), the writing on this tablet has been translated as follows:

For two years and five months, Nanaa-uzelli shall teach Bel-ahe-eriba son of Ben-usallim exorcism and cleansing (?). At the time he teaches him, 2 shekels of silver (is) Nanaa-uzelli's fee. If he does not teach him Nanaa-uzelli shall pay 6 ga. of barley a day. When Ben-usallim (departs and goes to) another place the silver he will return

(Witnesses)

.....iddina(?)	son of Sin-musallim
.....	son of the ox-keeper
Ea-ephes-ili	son of Allanu
Nabu-iquisa	son of Nanahhu
Remut-Gula	son of Ahiautu
Nabu-usabsi	son of the builder

Scribe: Sirikti-Marduk, son of Kudurana. Borsippa, month Nisan, day 18th, year 19th, Kandalana, King of Babylon.

The translation is incomplete because of damage. This tablet has all the requirements of a modern contract, or of an apprenticeship indenture and, in addition, includes a penalty clause. It certainly would be legally binding. The trade which Bel-ahe-eriba was to be taught would, nowadays, be regarded as odd, to say the least. The length of apprenticeship approaches present-day periods but the fee of two shekels of silver for an apprenticeship lasting two years and five months seems to have been very low. However, the apprentice was probably expected to help the master in his work.

This tablet was probably something more than a simple apprenticeship contract. In the Penguin Book of Lost Worlds, Volume 2, Leonard Cottrell maintains that these clay tablets were in effect the 'documents' of the time. In archeological excavations in Turkey, in the remains of what once had been a royal palace, an archive section was discovered in which there were over 10,000 clay tablets, all in cuneiform writing in which the characters and letters were impressed by the wedge-shaped facets of a stylus. Only some of these tablets could be deciphered but they included legal documents, a code of law, and correspondence with foreign rulers. In the remains of a trading post on one of the ancient trade routes in Syria, other excavations unearthed:

neat houses and orderly offices, containing baked clay tablets neatly stacked on shelves: bills of sale, contracts, receipts, accounts - all the paraphernalia of a prosperous trading community which lived in amity with the rulers of the near-by Bronze Age City.(6)

Perhaps then, the tablet in the Chester Beatty Library was part of a local register of apprentices in the city of Borsippa. As Leonard Cottrell puts it:

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The list of specialised workmen and craftsmen drawn from the inscriptions reveal a complex and highly organised society. There were seamstresses and cleaners, saddlemakers or leather workers, carpenters and masons, shipbuilders and caulkers, bronzesmiths and goldsmiths, bowmakers and, of course, potters, and so on down a long line of trades and occupations including a variety of agricultural pursuits.(7)

In the Bulletin Supplement on Greek Papyri, published in 1967, by the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London, J.D. Thomas describes a rough draft of a contract on papyrus dated 164 A.D. The text of the draft is as follows:

Polydeuces, son of Pabous, the son of Hermes, of Syriace, about 42 years old unmarked, ... agrees with Herodes, son of Harpalus, about 32 years old, unmarked to have received from him a loan of 64 silver dr. and instead of repaying these and the interest on them, to provide his son Pimen of necessity taking his abode with Herodes for four months from the month of Mecheir of the current 5th. year performing ..... (indecipherable), being maintained and clothed by his father (?) who will also be responsible (?) for all the public taxes due on his behalf, and if he is sick or disobedient on any days, to provide him serving an equal number of days after the expiry of the term.(8)

J.D.Thomas suggests that this could possibly be an apprenticeship 'with paramone' (provision for the repayment of a loan). In the Bulletin he refers to other Greek apprenticeship contracts on papyrus which have been listed by different researchers and comments on the short duration to be served as set out in this particular document. He points out that the usual length of time specified to be served in



apprenticeship contracts on papyrus is much longer than five months and would normally vary between one and five years,

In the Sumerian city states in Mesopotamia, which existed before 3,000 B.C., there is evidence that there was quite a well developed apprenticeship system with a fixed number of years laid down for the various trades. For example, the period of apprenticeship for a stone-mason is said to have been four years. In Ireland, a period of seven years was required for this trade until well into the present century, as described by Seamus Murphy in his book Stone Mad. (9)

#### **Craftsmanship and Civilisation:**

In summary, therefore, what is really known about the origins of apprenticeship? What can be said with certainty is that, although the word apprentice is of comparatively recent origin, it is indeed an ancient institution. There are actual records which prove that the concept existed in the millenium before Christ was born, and probably long before that, in a format very similiar to that found today in developed countries. Although a pictorial form of writing is known to have been in use in what is now Iran from 3100 B.C. and although scripts and early alphabets were not developed until the period 1,759 to 1,500 B.C., the probability is that a form of oral apprenticeship contract existed long before the introduction of writing in whatever form it took. It can also be said with a high degree of probability that there were records of formal apprenticeship arrangements maintained in what were the public record offices of towns and cities and in the archives of the palaces of the rulers of the ancient world. Records also show that there was a wide range of trades and crafts in existence to fulfil the needs of a highly organised society with its cities, towns, palaces and trading posts. It is also apparent,

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from the archeological remains which have been uncovered and from the artefacts which have survived in stone, bronze, gold and other materials, that the system of training employed and the techniques developed produced workmanship of outstanding quality and splendour.

As for where it all began, we can only surmise and make deductions, but it would be safe to say that craftsmanship and the system by which it was learned developed and progressed with civilisation itself to fulfil the demands of society. Man, the hunter, had very basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and protection. In his wanderings he made use of whatever materials were at hand to fulfil his requirements. He used stone and wood to make implements, skins for clothing, foliage or caves for shelter. He was probably the original jack-of-all-trades, if he needed something, he made it himself or did without. His children picked up whatever skills he had through demonstration, observation, imitation and oral communication. This same process of learning can be observed today in primitive societies. When man began to put down roots as a primeval farmer, his basic needs still existed but, as his standard of living improved, higher level needs arose, such as improved living accomodation, utensils for food and water, stockades for his animals, the improvement of his land through cultivation and irrigation, and now, as he was a man of substance, better defensive arrangements. He began to produce more than was required to support himself and his family and realised that there was an economic advantage to be gained by bartering this surplus for other goods which he needed but which he was unable to produce himself. Initially, in this situation, goods but not actual skills were bartered. He became less of a jack-of-all-trades and more of a specialist and, consequently, had a smaller range of skills to pass on to his children but, at the same time, could teach them more about his own area of specialisation.

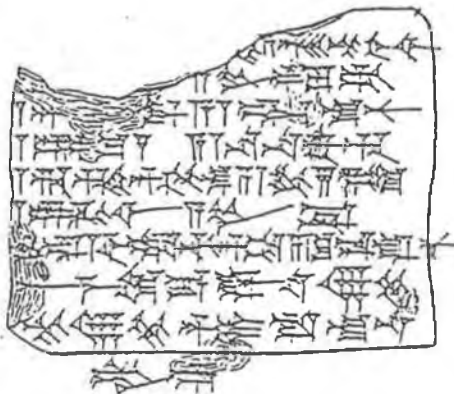
As villages, towns and cities developed and as society became more complex, specialisation increased. Individuals with special talents in the use of particular materials became stone-masons, potters, seamstresses, carpenters etc. Those people who were not farmers bartered their special skills in return for the necessities of life for themselves and their families who normally assisted them in their work. In this way, particular families became identified with particular trades and occupations and the 'hereditary' form of apprenticeship developed. As new materials became available and new techniques were learned, new trades appeared such as the bronzesmith, the goldsmith, the wheelwright, many of these being off-shoots of existing basic trades. As society became more wealthy and with the advent of rulers and kings, many of whom, like King Kaldalana of Babylon, were regarded as divine and were the focus of religious cults, the demands and challenges presented to tradesmen and craftsmen increased. Goods of higher and higher quality were produced and techniques improved as craftsmen travelled, sometimes as captives, from one location to another.

However accurate these deductions may be, the facts are that, thousands of years before the Christian era, there existed objects of such beauty and fine workmanship that they could only be the products of well established techniques and highly skilled craftsmen. Whether we examine the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, the Levant, the Indus Valley or Rome, widely separated by time and distance, our findings are generally similar: civilisation and craftsmanship developed hand-in-hand and the evidence, though scant, would suggest that the craft skills were passed on and learned through a form of apprenticeship not greatly unlike that which has survived into modern times.

FIGURE 1

BABYLONIAN TABLETS OF BERENS COLLECTION

Reverse



For 2 years (and) 5 months Nanaa-uzelli shall teach Bêl-âhê-êriba son of Ben-ušallim exorcism (*kurgarrātu*) and cleansing (?) (*hubbātu*). At the time he teaches him, 2 shekels of silver (is) Nanaa-uzelli's fee. If he does not teach him, Nanaa-uzelli shall pay 6 *qa* of barley a-day. When Ben-ušallim [departs and goes to] another [place], the silver he will return.

[Witnesses:] . . . -iddina (?), son of Sin-mušallim;

. . . son of the ox-keeper;

Êa-êpheš-ili, son of Allanu;

Nabû-iqiša, son of Nanahhu;

Rêmut-Gula, son of Ahiantu;

Nabû-ušabši, son of the builder.

Scribe: Širikti-Marduk, son of Kuduranu.

Borsippa, month Nisan, day 18th, year 19th, Kandalana, king of Babylon.

In the absence of a really parallel text it is impossible to restore the broken lines with certainty. In the translation, however, the portion in brackets probably gives the sense.

Though carefully written, one or two departures from the common forms are noticeable. These are the use of  $\text{I } \dot{s}u$  for  $\text{III } su$  in lines 5 and 6 (cf. *ulammud-su* in

### ANCIENT APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACT

References:

- (1) M. J. MacAuliffe, The History of Aenach Tailtenn and The Ancient Irish Laws. (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1928) Introduction p.1ii.
- (2) Genesis. Chapter 4, Verse 22.
- (3) Ecclesiasticus. Chapter 38, Verses 27, 31, 32 & 34.
- (4) Henry Maine, Ancient Law. (London: John Murray, 1906) p.326
- (5) T.G. Pinches, The Babylonian Tablets of the Berens Collection. Asiatic Society Monograph, Vol. xvi.(London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1915) p.134.
- (6) Leonard Cottrell, The Penguin Book of Lost Worlds Vol.ii. (Great Britain: Jarrold and Sons, Ltd., Norwich, 1966), p.109.
- (7) Ibid., p.39.
- (8) J.D.Thomas, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the Collection of Wilfred Menton, Vol.iii. (London University: Institute of Classical Studies, 1967) p.20.
- (9) Seamus Murphy, Stone Mad. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

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## Chapter Two

### APPRENTICESHIP AND THE GUILDS

#### Ancient Guilds

Many people tend to associate apprenticeship with the guild (1) system, and in particular, with the medieval guilds which flourished in the city states and towns of Europe in the Middle Ages. In fact, apprenticeship is often believed to have its origins in one particular type known as the craft guild. Certainly, it was an integral part of the craft guild system, through which it became highly developed. It was for centuries, until the demise of the guilds, the structured method by which young persons were trained to be craftsmen, as well as receiving an informal education in good citizenship. It is now known, however, that the concept of apprenticeship, and in some cases, formalised apprenticeships, existed in the ancient Sumerian and Egyptian civilisations, in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia and in the valley of the Nile, from about 4000 B.C. There was also a well developed guild system in these civilisations of which apprenticeship formed a part.

In their account of pre-history and the beginnings of civilisation, Sir Leonard Woolley and Jacquetta Hawkes describe the importance of foreign trade to the Sumerians and the particular importance of clothmaking, which supplied its chief export, as follows:

Clothmaking was too important economically to remain a domestic industry; men took part in it early and it was carefully organised. The profession was hereditary. All professional weavers wherever they worked were members of a guild headed by a guild master; he carried out all negotiations with government officials, supplied them with lists of members and arranged for the payment of taxes due upon goods produced. Most weavers worked not independently but in factories. Work was highly specialised, the spinners, the dyers and the fullers belonged to separate guilds.(2)

The shipmasters of the ancient city of Ur had their guild, known as the Alik-Telmun, (the ancient name for Bahrain), which seemed to have had a monopoly of the traffic on the river and the canal from Ur to the sea. Many contemporary tablets give information on the guilds in Sumer. They include employment registers and stock lists of many trades which operated in the temples of Sumer in the period 2550 to 2335 B.C. Around this

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time, the temple was the manufacturing unit for the bulk of the goods destined for the market; it contained a factory or workshops where most of the workers were slaves. After 2000 B.C., the role of the temple was replaced by privately owned workshops and civilian associations superseded the former officials, generally priests, of the temples. This change resulted in an increase in the power of the various guilds and it also raised the status of the craftsmen, who now became freemen. Some slave labour was still used and even a slave could be apprenticed to learn a trade. If this happened, his rights were protected and he could look forward to the day when he could go into partnership with his master. In Egypt there is a personal account of an architect, Nekhebu, who says of himself:

His Majesty found me a common builder, and his Majesty appointed me to the offices of Inspector of Builders and Superintendent of a Guild.(3)

Again, in relation to the guilds in Egypt, Professor Leclant, in a note at the end of the section on the Bronze Age in The History of Mankind, says that the introduction of the horse and chariot into Egypt had political and social consequences, for example, 'new guilds arose, cartwrights, saddlers and metal workers'.(4)

What then was the nature of ancient guilds and how did they originate? In the early stages of civilisation the family or kin supplied its own needs, food, clothes, housing and whatever tools it needed. As civilisation developed agriculture and industrial activities separated, the farmer ceased to make goods and the craftworker did not work the land, both produced surpluses which they exchanged with one another. This was known as the handicraft stage. It was followed by the retail handicraft stage in the development of industry where the craftsman produced his wares by handiwork and sold them himself direct to the consumer. There followed the domestic system, often called the wholesale handicraft stage, where the craftsman still operated by hand in his home but worked for someone else who supplied the raw materials, the tools, and later, the machines, and who paid the craftsman for the items he produced and then sold them to the consumer. The middleman or trader had arrived. The final stage in the development of industrial production was the factory system. Parallel with the development of industry came the urbanisation of society, from the family settlement to the village, the town, the city state and, finally, the nation state.

The guilds were to have their origins in the demise of the kin system, the rise of the retail handicraft stage of industry and the growth of towns and city states. These conditions existed in the ancient city states in Sumer, in Egypt, in Rome and Greece and, in the Middle Ages, in the towns and cities of

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Europe, including England and Ireland. Although there are some rare examples of rural-based guilds, for example that of the sheepowners in the Castile district of Spain which was known as the Mesta,(5) the guilds were a product of industrial and commercial activities in towns and cities. It was the development of the factory system and the rise of the nation state, with its national laws and its centralised economic and industrial policies, which heralded the demise of the guilds in the 18th. and 19th. centuries. There was an unsuccessful attempt to re-introduce the concept in the first two decades of the 20th. century under the banner of Guild Socialism.

As society developed and became more affluent, individuals sought security and stability by forming associations. In rural areas, the serf had achieved security through the feudal system, whereby his local lord or king had allocated to him a piece of land sufficient to keep him in modest comfort in return for certain services. He could not be separated from his land, even for the payment of a debt, and, if the land were acquired by another lord or king, the serf went with it. In the case of the urban handicraft worker, his only 'possession' was his skill, knowledge and experience. The tools of his craft were so primitive that he had to devote himself entirely to his trade to earn a decent living from his output. He saw the need to protect himself against undue competition; it must not be too easy for others to learn what he had learned and, by increasing production, bring down the value of what he made. The number of handicraft workers in a particular trade had to be kept within limits and the secrets of each craft had to be jealously protected. The natural result of these fears and the perceived need for security, stability and association with similiar workers was the organisation of guilds.

They had social as well as economic objectives. In Sumer, the guilds were not independent of government, they were recognised and utilised by the city officials, although they do appear to have been democratic institutions. The guild master, the 'Chief of the Joiners' or the 'Chief of the Weavers', did indeed look after the interests of his guild but he also furnished the officials with lists of his members, he collected excise duties on the produce of his guild and passed it on to the government, he took orders for the amount of guild goods needed for state use and arranged for the distribution of labour accordingly. There were mutual advantages in this arrangement as it made relations and contacts easier. For control, convenience and association with other members of the guild, each trade had its own quarter in the city, a custom which persists even today in some Middle Eastern countries. As well, each craft was inspired by, and under the protection of a god. The smith, in particular, was highly respected and treated with awe as, with the aid of the fire-god, Vulcan, he made metal out of ore, softened it and, amid showers of sparks and billowing smoke and

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using mysterious rituals and magic words, shaped it at will with his tools. The smith's secrets were regarded as divine in origin and could not be divulged to anyone outside the closed circle of the guild. The master, under the pain of a heavy penalty, had to instruct his apprentice in all these secrets and magic formulae, and surviving texts show that this instruction was provided in a craft jargon unknown to anyone but a guild member.

For example. in the 17th. century B.C., one Liballit-Marduk of Babylon wrote down in cryptogram form, for the benefit of his family or guild, the recipe for glazing pottery. According to a text in the British Museum (120960), the recipe remained a secret in the guild for a thousand years and was not published, in clear, until the beginning of the 7th. century B.C. In Sumer, also, the craftsman was a freeman and was highly regarded and it is of interest that, in the story of the flood, the Sumerian Noah, Uta-Napishtim, is said to have taken into his ark all manner of handicraft workers so that their skills might not be lost to the world. Trades were hereditary and passed from father to son, girls were apprenticed to certain trades and provision was made for outsiders and slaves of the family to become apprentices. Different guilds had their own periods of apprenticeship; for weavers it was five years, for masons four years, for fullers (skilled workers who cleaned and thickened cloth during the manufacturing process), two and a half years, while bakers served fifteen months.

In Egypt, on the other hand, craftsmen were serfs working in the households and on the estates of Egyptian noblemen or in the temples of the Pharaoh. They could become freemen 'by grace and favour', as happened to the architect Nekhebu. By the 'Law of Sesostris' (6), which decreed that a son must follow the occupation of his father or commit a most horrid sacrilege, trades were hereditary. Just as the agricultural labourer was bound to the land, the craftsman was chained to his bench. Unlike those of Sumer, Egyptian guilds were controlled by the Pharaoh and used as instruments to promote his policies. They could, therefore, offer little protection to their members who were mostly dispersed in the households of the noblemen and could not be as easily organised and controlled as if they had their own quarter in the towns.

### **The Medieval Guilds**

The medieval guild is met with throughout the whole of the Christian west of Europe and was known under various names. In Italy, the terms *ars*, *mestiere*, *collegia* and *universitas* are commonly found in the various guild charters. In Rome, the company of mercers was called the '*universitas merciariorum*' and the bakers, '*universitas pistorum*'.(7) The term 'hanse'

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was used in the area of north-west Europe which eventually came under the influence of the Hanseatic League while 'gildi' was used in Norse countries, 'consulado' in Spain and 'gield' in England. There was a weavers guild in Mainz as early as 1099 A.D. and guilds existed in England from about 1100 A.D., having been introduced by the Normans. Their period of greatest development and power was from the 13th. to the 16th. centuries, although they were still being established as late as the 17th. century. By that time, however, they were very much in decline due to changes resulting from the Renaissance, which began in Italy in the mid 14th century and continued throughout the 15th. and into the early 16th. century, from the religious Reformation of the 16th. century, and from the national and international expansion of markets and the rise of the nation states. Following this period of long decline, laws and decrees, effectively abolishing craft associations, were passed in France in 1791, in Rome in 1807, in England in 1835, in Spain in 1840, in Germany and Austria in 1859/60 and in Italy in 1864. By this time, however, the basis of their authority had long been eroded. A few of these medieval guilds are still in existence today, notably the Company of Goldsmiths in London and in Dublin. (8)

The environment in which these medieval guilds were established and flourished was essentially the same as in the ancient civilisations; they grew up in towns and cities and for the mutual protection of economic, social and professional interests. However, in Europe, where again the town and not the state was the unit of the medieval economy, their ethos was very much influenced by Christianity.(9) A fundamental principle underlying their existence and operation was that the direct control of industry, as it then existed, should be in the hands of the producers under a system of regulation for the common good. The guilds were strongest where municipal and national governments were weakest. In some circumstances, they dominated and almost constituted the municipal authority, but in other instances, particularly when they were in decline and corrupt, the state and the municipality were freely used to keep them under control. In the Middle Ages in Europe, industry occupied a very small place in a society which was mainly agricultural; it existed mainly in towns and cities and the unit of production was the workshops, (and the home), of the master craftsman, where he worked with his journeymen and apprentices producing goods which he sold direct to the consumer. He was a master craftsman only because he was a full member of his guild and obeyed its many rules and regulations, often referred to as ordinances. Although he was a freeman of his guild and also of the town, he was not 'free', for example, to adopt any methods or scale of production he himself might choose. The guild laid down for him, and for other masters, regulations as to the quality of his products, the price he should charge, the wages and conditions of his journeymen and the rules under which he might recruit and train

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apprentices. All these were strictly enforced and were aimed at safeguarding the independence of the guild, and the equality and prosperity of all its members and ensuring that the apprentices could progress, firstly to journeyman, and then to master status. The rules in relation to quality were enforced through a system of 'searches' carried out by guild officials to protect the consumer from shoddy goods. Punishment for transgression could be severe, and the ultimate punishment was 'excommunication', (though not in the religious sense), such as that imposed on one master in England:

that no man shall receive him, nor buy or sell with him, nor give him fire or water, nor hold communication with him under the penalty of the loss of one's freedom.(10)

Being a freeman, or 'free of the guild' as it was termed, had important privileges: he was also a freeman of the city; he could vote in the municipal elections; he could himself be elected a member of the municipal council and might even become mayor; he had the right and duty to carry arms in defence of his town and had a special place in pageants, processions and religious ceremonies, at which he wore 'livery'; the guilds ceremonial clothing. Livery was introduced to inculcate solidarity but, in the end, it had the opposite effect and caused dissention as only the wealthy members known as 'the livery men' could afford it. Sometimes, however, the guild supplied livery for members who had fallen on hard times so that they would not be embarrassed at guild functions, such as the monthly Mass at which all members were required to attend.

It was the practice that every occupation which had twenty or more workers in a town could form its own guild: in Paris, at the end of the 13th. century, there were eighty, of which fifteen were exclusively female. Very large numbers of them must, therefore, have existed throughout Europe, each one of which was self regulating and had its own set of rules. It is possible, therefore, to deal only in very broad outline with them and to endeavour to find a common thread. The 'Gild Merchant' was the first to appear. This was established by royal charter and was given the monopoly of trade within a town and was concerned with maintaining that monopoly. This trade charter was distinct from the municipal charter, also granted by the monarch, and providing for municipal government. (The Alik-Telmun, the shipmasters' guild of Ur already referred to, was an ancient form of Gild Merchant). Often, where the charter was granted, all the burghers of the town at the time became members but, afterwards, membership passed by inheritance, the eldest son having free admission while the others had to pay a fee. As industry and trade developed, the Gild Merchant split in two, forming separate craft guilds for craftsmen, who provided goods for direct sale to the consumer, and mercantile guilds consisting of traders who bought and sold. Gild Merchants had disappeared by the 14th. century. One of the

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common threads in all these guilds, whether they were craft or mercantile, was that they all had an apprenticeship system. It was the craft guilds which catered for the handicraft trades and, in general, their aims and operations can be summarised as follows:

mutual aid associations for economic, industrial and professional purposes which had a Christian social ethos

safeguarding the rights of members against non-members

fair return to their members for their work and a fair price to the consumer

insistence on good workmanship and sound materials

as wide a distribution of private property as possible - the amassing of wealth was seen as wrong; common profit as opposed to private profit.

The right to establish guilds was a matter for municipal government but, at times, a royal charter was obtained. Guilds made their own rules called ordinances and these had to be examined and modified before they were accepted by the municipal authorities as having the force of law and applying to all townspeople, including non-members of the guild. The Rev. George Clune in his book The Medieval Gild System summarises the position as follows:

The aim of the gilds was to make it possible for every brother to earn his bread by the exercise of his craft and there was a real desire to unite the members of each gild into one big family and to develop the idea of group responsibility ..... Industrial exploitation or self aggrandizement was rendered impossible by the strictest gild standards. .... If it sprang from economic needs, it claimed at least to subordinate these to social interests as conceived by men for whom the social and spiritual were inextricably intertwined.(11)

In regard to the spiritual aspects, one writer on the subject, Lipson, maintains that they seem to have originated as religious fraternities and to have assumed industrial, economic and social functions later. The Roman Catholic Church strongly promoted the system and it is interesting to note that there was a Cardinal at the head of each guild in Rome at one stage.(12) Each guild had its own patron saint selected from some incident in his/her life which was connected with the craft, or alternatively, was under the protection of some divine 'mystery'. It had its religious ceremonies and the patron's day was marked with High Mass, celebrated in the guild chapel by the chaplain to the guild and there was a procession attended by all members wearing livery and carrying

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banners. Prayers and Masses were offered for the deceased, poor or ill members. Widows and orphans were provided for from the guild chest which was kept topped up by fines, fees, tolls and bequests. The general poor, too, were looked after; in Paris, each member of the Guild of Goldsmiths opened his premises, in turn, on Sundays and the proceeds were donated to the poor. The guilds were, in fact, the benefit societies of the Middle Ages. They often assumed responsibility for building churches, maintaining highways and bridges and providing free grammar schools. The Guild of Corpus Christi, in Cambridge, founded the College that still bears its name and, in Florence, the wealthy guild of wool-merchants, the Arte Della Lana, took charge of the building and decoration of the dome of the Cathedral.

### Guilds and Apprenticeship

What, then, has all this to do with apprenticeship? It was the climate in which the craft apprentice, before the advent of formal schooling, received his training as a craftsman, his education as a person and his introduction to good citizenship. This included, not only experience in the activities of his own guild, but, in the wider sense, involvement in civic and religious affairs. It was how he learned to make his contribution to society.

Guilds were organised on the basis of three classes of members, the livery, the freemen and the apprentices.(13) The livery consisted of masters who had their own businesses and it from these that the Guild Master, the Wardens and the Courts of Assistants were drawn. They were responsible for the running of the guild, including the fixing of wages and prices. The freemen were the journeymen craftsmen who had served their time and were 'free of the guild' and they could apply to become freemen of the town. If they had the money or the contacts, they could set up as masters, but normally could not work outside the guild without its permission (the term journeyman derives from the French journee/jour, a day, and means one who works by the day).(14) At the bottom of the scale was the apprentice bound under contract to his master for a fixed period to learn his trade. The Court of Assistants had special responsibility for his welfare, ensuring that he received proper instruction and was well treated. At the end of his 'time', the apprentice submitted to the Wardens his 'masterpiece', a piece of craftsmanship made entirely by himself and which sometimes included all the important techniques of his craft, to prove that he was now competent. The Wardens, as part of the quality control mechanism, also exercised the legal right of the guild to 'search'; they could seize and destroy anything they found to be sub-standard and could punish the offending master by a fine, a period in the pillory or, in extreme cases as has been seen, by 'excommunication'.

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In the early days of the craft guilds the rules which governed apprenticeship were vague. Initially, it was a private arrangement with a master, who was also a householder, to take a young person into his home as one of his family, to train in his trade. The period was not fixed, it lasted until the master was satisfied that his pupil was competent. The labour of the apprentice was free to the master but, sometimes, an annual fee in corn, bread or money was due by the parents or guardian. In England, formal apprenticeship can be traced back to 1260 A.D. and by the end of that century, it had become an integral and universal element of the craft guild system there, and, in London, was subject to the municipal laws.(15) The period the apprentice had to serve varied widely; sometimes it depended on the favour of the master but, generally, the period ranged between four and twelve years with seven years being the norm, the various guilds using it to control the supply of craftsmen to their trade. In London it was felt that uniformity was necessary and, in 1345 A.D., there was a general guild ordinance, which became the municipal law, requiring masters to swear that apprentices would not be taken on for less than seven years. In 1563 A.D., by the Statute of Artificers, this London law became the law of the realm.(16)

The age at which apprenticeship started also varied with the particular guild: sometimes it was eighteen or nineteen years, sometimes not less than fourteen years, and sometimes it could be as low as eleven years. It was found that, if the age was too low, apprentices were marrying too early and moving away from masters to set up on their own so that, in 1565 A.D., the London authorities decreed that all apprentices must be twenty-four years old when they completed their time, though they did not seem to mind at what age they started. Seven years seems a long time to spend learning any trade. Adam Smith, in his Wealth of Nations, while agreeing that the 'dexterity of the hand, indeed, even in common trades, cannot be acquired without much practice and experience', maintained that the essential skills of any trade could be learned in a matter of weeks! (17). But then, he did not think much of the guild system as it existed towards the end of the 18th. century, or of apprenticeship for that matter, seeing them both as devices which sustained monopolies in what was, in fact, becoming a laissez faire society. However, as envisaged by the craft guilds, apprenticeship was more than just learning a skill. For whatever reason, the seven year period seems, eventually, to have become universal throughout Europe. There were abuses, of course, and sometimes the son of a master would serve a shorter period, and the time might also be shortened by the payment of a fee. It is interesting, however, that in the early days of the modern university, a period of seven years was needed to acquire master status and the period also seems to have been set by the Church in the preparation of priests.

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Another issue of concern to the guilds was the number of apprentices taken on. Masters would have favoured no restrictions on numbers, (though keeping an eye to the future to ensure that there would not be too many potential masters who could become competitors), as an abundant supply of labour would put them in a strong bargaining position with their journeymen. There was, of course, a practical limit to the number of apprentices that a master could look after while maintaining an adequate level of production and quality standards. Journeymen, on the other hand, would insist on restrictions, as an increased supply of journeymen would limit their chances of getting work and could reduce their wages. Journeymen Guilds (known as 'compagnons' in Europe), probably the pre-cursors of the modern craft unions, and consisting of workers only, developed later.(18)

Although the reasons for the delimitation of numbers might appear on the surface to be purely economic, the ethos of the craft guilds in ensuring fair play for all, a sufficiency of craft workers, a reasonable wage and the keeping open of the opportunity for all to become masters, was probably also a factor. There are many examples from the ordinances of the various guilds in relation to apprentice numbers. The Tailors of Exeter insisted on three journeymen for every one apprentice, the Slaters of Newcastle decreed that no one might take on an apprentice for less than seven years and that no new apprentice could be taken on until the existing apprentice was within a year of finishing his time.(19) Some guilds restricted a master to three apprentices, others to two and others to one. Sometimes the rank and service of the master determined the number, but the maximum was four. In an endeavour to control the numbers of apprentices one Coopers Guild imposed a fine or levy of ten shillings per week on any member who had more than two apprentices, whereas other guilds imposed similiar penalties on masters for every apprentice taken on. From about the 16th. century, in England, the Government, operating a form of manpower policy, intervened.(20) As manufacturing industry became more attractive than agriculture, there was a drift to the towns creating a shortage of rural workers and also giving rise to urban problems. Two laws were passed, one decreeing that children who had worked on the land until they were twelve years of age should continue to do so, and the second that no man might place his children as apprentices unless he had a certain valuation. From time to time, abuses crept in and often resulted in a small number of craftsmen exercising a monopoly of a particular craft.

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### The Apprentice Indenture

From the guilds' point of view, a young person being taken on as an apprentice had to be of good character; after all, he was a potential master and freeman of the town and he must uphold the ideals of the guild. It was considered that no matter how long the period of apprenticeship it could not overcome an inherent defect of character. Production of shoddy goods was not due to poor training but to a propensity to cheat and defraud. The master, too, had to be acceptable as a person who could be trusted to train and supervise a young person. An apprenticeship contract was legally binding. In the early days it was usually verbal, but eventually, in accordance with guild rules, it was written in the form of an indenture, usually drawn up by the clerk of the guild and for which a fee was payable. It was signed by both parties and often sworn in the presence of a notary and witnesses. The apprentice indenture, (See Figure 2), or articles of apprenticeship, constituted a legal contract which got its name from the custom which was common at the time in respect of all written contracts. Two or more identical versions of the contract were written down, side by side, on a single sheet of parchment which was then cut irregularly between the texts with a knife. By matching the indentations on both pieces of parchment it was possible to verify the authenticity of the texts. The indenture set out the rights, duties and obligations of the parties involved; it specified the trade to be learned and the period of apprenticeship. Sometimes, it made provision for a probationary period, normally two weeks, during which either party could withdraw. It laid down the fee to be paid and the wages, if any, of the apprentice. The master, for his part, agreed to teach the apprentice all the secrets and mysteries of his craft; to provide bed, boots, clothing food and general supervision. Sometimes, there was provision for a 'freedom suit' at the end of the apprenticeship. In his book, The Apprentices, Leon Garfield describes how a London apprentice to mirror-framing was provided with a bed which was under the counter in his master's shop!(21)

Sometimes, the master agreed to provide a general education and, in some European countries, to have the apprentice taught two languages in addition to the vernacular. The master had the right and indeed, in some indentures, the obligation to chastise and punish the apprentice for wrong-doing but this had to be 'in accordance with the law'. In some French indentures, the phrase 'short of drawing blood' was used in this connection, but the masters' wives were not permitted to beat apprentices. Another indenture provided that the apprentice was not to be fed salmon more than twice per week! The apprentice for his part promised, and often swore, to obey and be loyal, to keep his master's secrets, not to waste or steal his goods, not to frequent taverns, play at dice, sleep away from his master's house and not to marry during his apprenticeship. He



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was expected to do normal household chores, to conduct himself at all times in a sober and pious manner like a good Christian and faithful servant, otherwise he was to serve double time.

Municipal authorities often demanded that apprentices be enrolled in their presence; it enabled them to register them and collect fees for it, to control numbers and the length of the apprenticeship and also to assess the general suitability of the potential freeman. In addition, it provided an opportunity to check the credentials and character of the master. Admission generally took place in the Town Hall or in the Guild Hall and was accompanied by due ceremony, in view of the legal consequences involved and, also, as it was the beginning of a novitiate to citizenship. The guild through its Wardens and Courts of Assistants supervised the training of apprentices to ensure that it complied with guild ordinances. An apprentice could complain his master to the guild if he considered he had been unfairly treated and if, for example, unfair punishment had been meted out. In such cases the guild could require the master to pay doctors' bills, to compensate the apprentice and to pay a fine. Apprentices could, in certain circumstances, be removed by the guild from a master and transferred to another, and the offending master would find it difficult to get a replacement. On the other hand, apprentices were often unruly and difficult, becoming involved in riots and running away. If this happened, the apprentice's place would be kept for him for a specified time and, if he returned, he would be punished but reinstated. If he ran away for a third time, he was dismissed and would not be allowed to return to the trade at all, while his parents had to compensate the master. The Courts of Assistants would visit each apprentice at his workplace at least once per year and question him on how guild regulations and the requirements of his indenture were being observed and would take action against any master in default. On the other hand, provision was made in the guild rules for the protection of masters who were owed money by apprentices when they had finished their time as sometimes happened. A London evening newspaper, in 1764, reported the case of a haberdasher's apprentice in Cheapside, 'a sober and industrious youth always polite and quietly dressed' who had embezzled £10,000 of his master's money, an enormous sum at the time. He had not gambled it, he had not spent it wildly, he had invested it in sound stock so that he could set up on his own when his seven years apprenticeship was finished. For his punishment, he was transported to His Majesty's colonies in America where, as Leon Garfield puts it in his foreword to The Apprentices - 'it is supposed that his genius prospered most likely in the banking line'. (22)

This then is how the medieval guilds organised the training and education of their apprentices. It was a structured and controlled approach, well suited to industry as it existed at the time. There were, no doubt, many flaws in the operation of

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the system and of the guilds themselves, and it would be foolish to imagine that there were not people, at all levels, who were prepared to work purely for selfish motives. It did, however, provide a vision of good practice which must have had some influence on all involved in it. The internal workings of the guilds provided an excellent training ground in good citizenship. In a practical way the guild members, including apprentices, learned the advantages of group solidarity, the skills of self government, not only within the guild, but also at municipal level, and they took an active interest in their own social, economic and industrial affairs. The guilds spanned a period which encompassed slavery, worker unrest, the emancipation of the worker, and the beginnings of the modern labour movement (triggered by their abolition) which led to the status of the worker in today's society.

### **The Decline of the Guilds**

The decline and decay of the guilds began in the 16th. century and the reasons were both internal and external. Internally, oligarchy and nepotism led to their becoming more exclusive. Social distinction appeared among the members; the master craftsman found himself, in relation to the wealthy trader or manufacturer, in the position of a labourer to his employer. He no longer sold to the consumer what he himself had designed and produced with his own hands, from the materials he had selected and purchased; he was no longer personally responsible to the consumer for the quality of his product; his work was no longer his vocation; he sold his skill and his time to an employer for a wage; he was a 'hand' rather than a citizen. As this decay continued, a power struggle developed between the craftsman producers, typical of the great days of the guilds, and the traders and merchants who produced nothing themselves, but who were amassing capital and exercising increasing control over the production, as well as the sale of goods. The craftsman, now cut off from the consumer, lost his status, not only as a free producer, but also within the community. The richer trade guilds limited entry by high entrance fees and yearly dues designed to keep the guilds select and to exclude the craftsman. The growth of new industries which had never come under guild regulations and the granting of special privileges by the Crown to favoured individuals hastened the decline. Where the guilds did not die as, for example in the case of the London Livery Companies, they evolved into wealthy, privileged organisations far removed from their medieval traditions.(23)

Among the external factors was the Renaissance which was rooted in the culture of Greece and Rome, with its low estimation of manual work, and which emphasised 'art' as distinct from 'craft' - almost as though the hands were not connected to the brains at all, and, possibly, initiating the differentiation between 'education' and 'training'. For example, in stonemasonry,

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there was a distinction between the sculptor and the mason, the artist split away from the painter and the apothecary now took his oath in Latin. The Reformation - which emphasised individual effort and profit as opposed to 'common' profit - and the religious wars resulting from it, which raged in the areas where the Hanseatic League operated, and where the guilds were strongest, wrought havoc among them. The expansion of trade from cities and towns, where it could be easily controlled, firstly to the surrounding countryside and then, as the Industrial Revolution proceeded, to national and international level, with the accompanying growth of capitalism, left the guilds helpless. Finally, the monarchies, and later the Nation States, always saw the power of the guilds as a rival to their own, and contributed to their downfall. This process was augmented by the development of national laws and national economic and industrial policies as opposed to the self-contained systems of the town or city.

During the 18th. and 19th. centuries in Europe, the medieval guilds as we know them were abolished. In France, following the French Revolution, their demise was particularly sudden. In March 1791, in legislation moved in the States-General, the following article was inserted in a bill dealing with the taxation of licences:

From April 1st. next inclusive, every citizen will be free to carry on whatever profession or trade seems good to him after having procured and paid for a licence.

In June 1791, there was a new law which provided that:

Citizens of whatever conditions or profession, middlemen, those who keep open shops, workmen or compagnons of whatever art may not when they find themselves together, nominate a president, secretary or syndic, keep registers, pass resolutions, make regulations for what they claim to be their common interests or bind themselves by agreements leading to the concerted refusal or to the granting only at a certain price, of the help of their industry and labours.

The guilds and their ideal of self help were guillotined, laissez-faire was the order of the day. What was done in the so-called interests of workers meant that the weak were abandoned to the mercy of the strong and the poor to the mercy of the rich. It was the termination of centuries of evolution of the guilds, but it was also the starting point of a development which created the modern trade union movement.(24)

Among the poorest and the weakest were young people, without education, seeking a start in life, and these included apprentices who were now without the protection of the guilds. The labour laws in England, from the Statute of Labourers in

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1350, which was passed 'against the malice of servants which were idle and not willing to serve after the pestilence without taking excessive wages', to 1802, when Peel introduced the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, were generally regarded as being anti-worker. The Statute of Artificers did offer limited protection in relation to the period of apprenticeship, which it fixed at seven years, and to the ratio of apprentices, which it set at one for every three journeymen employed by a master. It also specified that no one could practise a trade without serving an apprenticeship. However, the Statute only applied to occupations which existed at the time of its promulgation in 1563, and lawyers were able to argue successfully that it did not apply to new occupations which developed after that date. In any case, it was finally repealed in 1814, and the policies of laissez-faire then applied to apprenticeship just as they applied to all economic activity.(25)

Some apprenticeships continued under common law contracts but almost everywhere, as the Industrial Revolution progressed, there was a degraded form of apprenticeship for boys and girls which offered little or no training, and many children in the workplace suffered from hunger, overwork and ill-treatment. Factory 'apprentices', who were often 'parish apprentices' (orphans, waifs and abandoned children who were a charge on the parish) were frequently apprenticed in batches to factories. Many of them were only seven years of age and had to work twelve to fifteen hours a day for six days a week in appalling conditions. In one town in England, for example, of a workforce of 1150 employed in three mills, two-thirds were children.(26)

### New Beginnings

But there were positive and encouraging developments, too. Peel's Health and Morals of Apprentices Act of 1802 and his second Act of 1819, which applied to all children, heralded the beginning of legislation to regulate conditions in the workplace. Employers, such as Robert Owen, provided for his factory apprentices, not only board and lodgings in pleasant and well-designed apprentice houses, still to be seen at Styal and Mellor, but also the rudiments of a general education, including singing.(27) The importance of technical education was being recognised and, as early as 1800, George Birkbeck, a professor at Andersons Institute in Glasgow, had begun classes for workmen and artisans who wished to learn the scientific principles underlying their trades. This initiative led to the opening of Mechanics Institutes in Glasgow, London and Sheffield and, by 1850, there were 610 such institutes in England. There were similar developments in Europe: in France, there was an early reaction to the Act of 1791, which opened the trades to all, when, in 1803, legislation concerning apprenticeship was re-introduced to be followed by another Act

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in 1851. Apprenticeship became an important feature of industrial training in Germany. In England, in 1824, trade unions became legal and the craft unions attempted to carry on some of the old guild traditions of apprenticeship. The need for general education for all was being promoted and national education policies and systems were being developed. The Society of Arts, which had been established in 1754, started a system of examinations in 1855. Following the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, at which many foreign countries exhibited the products of their industries, there was a sudden realisation in Britain that all was not well with the skills of the workforce. If Britain was to retain her position as a leading producer of industrial goods, something needed to be done to improve industrial skills as had been done in Germany and France. The Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, (the Samuelson Commission) which had been established in 1881 to examine the situation, reported in 1884,(28) at a time when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. What followed from this Report may be regarded as the basis on which the Irish Technical Education system, including apprentice training and education, began to be developed.

#### **The Craft Guilds and the City and Guilds of London Institute**

But the old craft guild system still had a contribution to make. In London, towards the end of the 19th. century, there continued to exist seventy-seven Livery Companies, the descendants of the old craft guilds of the city. Of these, it may have been that only the Company of Goldsmiths was still operating as a traditional craft guild, binding apprentices, assaying and hall-marking gold and silver, now to comply with the law of the land and not with the ordinances of the guild. Most of these Companies were very wealthy and were growing richer with the profits from the freehold property in the city which they had accumulated. They still administered their charities, made bequests and entertained themselves lavishly. In 1875, in a speech at Greenwich, Prime Minister Gladstone exhorted that:

efforts should be made to give instruction in science so as to improve the knowledge of the British artisan and workman to enable him to hold his position in the markets of the world.(29)

He appealed to the Livery Companies to use their wealth to fulfil the purpose for which they were founded ... developing crafts, trades and mysteries, instead of having dinners once a year or once a quarter or once a month and 'dealing out little sums of money to certain applicants and having it recorded how much good they had done'. The appeal succeeded: a provisional committee of the Companies was set up, which included representatives of the London municipal authorities, and having

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commissioned a number of expert reports, this Committee decided that a City and Guilds of London Institute should be established consisting of a central institute and a number of local trade schools. The original Institute was built on a three acre site provided by the Commission for the 1851 Great Exhibition at a cost of £120,000, and was formally opened on 25th. June, 1884. It was eventually to provide a testing and examination system used by apprentices and technicians world-wide.

Figure 2



WITNESSETH THAT Richard Matthews with the consent of his Uncle M. D. Matthews testifies by his execution of this indenture and gives him free will

doth put himself Apprentice to ~~John~~ <sup>John</sup> ~~Stapan~~ <sup>Stapan</sup> an ~~old~~ <sup>old</sup> ~~Master~~ <sup>Master</sup> to learn his Art, and with him (after the manner of an Apprentice) to dwell and serve from the ~~Month of~~ <sup>Month of</sup> ~~April~~ <sup>April</sup> 1899 until the full end and term of Seven Years, from thence next following to be fully completed and ended. During which Term the said Apprentice his said Master faithfully shall serve, his Secrets keep, his lawful Commandments everywhere gladly do; he shall do no damage to his said Master nor see it to be done of others, but that he to his power, shall let or forthwith give warning to his said Master of the same; he shall not waste the goods of his said Master or give or lend them unlawfully to any; he shall not contract Matrimony within the said Term; hurt to his said Master he shall not do, cause or procure to be done by others; he shall not play at Cards, Dice Tables, or any unlawful games where his said Master may have loss with his own or other Goods during the said Term; without License of his said Master he shall neither Buy nor Sell; he shall not haunt or use Taverns, Ale-houses, Play-houses, or absent himself from his said Master Service day or night unlawfully; but in all things as an honest and faithful Apprentice he shall behave himself towards his said Master and all his <sup>during</sup> the said Term. And the said Master his said Apprentice in the same Art which he useth, by the best ways and means that he can, shall teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed, with due correction, finding unto his said Apprentice

and the said M. D. Matthews agrees to pay to the said John Stapan for the sum of 40 pounds as a fee in the apprenticeship of said Richard Matthews said sum to be paid in the execution of these presents

And for the true performance of all and every of said Covenants and Arrangements either of the said parties bindeth himself to the other by these presents—IN WITNESS whereof the parties above-named to these INDENTURES have put their Hands and Seals the 14<sup>th</sup> day of ~~November~~ <sup>November</sup> in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and ~~ninety nine~~ <sup>ninety nine</sup>

Signed, Sealed, and delivered in the presence of

Thomas J. Warburton

Richard Matthews

M. D. Matthews

A Late Nineteenth Century Apprenticeship Indenture

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## Chapter Three

### THE IRISH BACKGROUND TRADITION OF CRAFTS AND APPRENTICESHIP

#### 1. Early Irish Craftsmanship and Apprenticeship

##### 'Work of Angels':

In the oral legends and mythology of ancient Ireland there are many references to early Irish craftsmanship. Outstanding examples of this work were to be seen in the exhibition, 'The Work of Angels' - jointly organised by the British, Irish and Scottish National Museums in 1989 - and are recorded in the publication, The Work of Angels issued in conjunction with that exhibition.(1) Seathrun Ceitinn gathered some of this lore in his History of Ireland, Foras Feasa ar Eirinn, completed around 1633 A.D.(2) He refers to the origins of the name Tuatha De Danann, a tribe said to have come to Ireland in mythological times. The tradition is that the name had a threefold origin, 'Tuatha' meaning a tribe or district with connotations of nobility and headship, 'De' relating to gods or druids, said to be accomplished in heathen arts, and 'Danann' derived from the word 'Dan', an art of any sort, including verse in which their secrets were transmitted, or a craft, 'for dan and ceard (handicraft) are equal'. The following are referred to as amongst the noblest of the Tuatha De Dannan: Goibhneann, the smith; Creidine, the artist or ceard; Dian Cecht, the physician; Luthain, the wright or saer; Cairbre, the poet and Brighid, the female poet. Some of these names will come up again in connection with Brehon Law tracts compiled around the 7th century. Nuadha is said to have been king of the Tuatha De Danann when they came to Ireland. He was later to be

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known as Nuadha Airgead Lamh (of the silver hand). At the first battle of Moytura, against the Firbolgs, his right hand is said to have been cut off. It took seven years to cure him by fitting a silver hand, hence the name, and incidentally, a tribute to the skills both of his physician and his smith. In the second battle of Moytura, against the Formorians, he was not as fortunate, as on this occasion his head was cut off! Whatever about the truth of these traditions or the accuracy of Foras Feasa ar Eirinn, there are plains called Moytura North, in Co. Sligo and Moytura South, near Cong in Co. Mayo, where traces of pre-historic battles have been found, and the tradition has survived to this day with a representation of Nuadha's silver hand forming a panel in the heraldic Arms of Connacht.

However doubtful the authenticity of the legends surrounding the Tuatha De Danann, who, according to the Psalter of Caiseal, reigned in Ireland for 197 years, one can take solace from the fact that archaeologists world-wide are increasingly in a position to verify at least some of the tales handed down initially in oral tradition. We are dealing with physical things, however, when the architectural remains and artifacts of early Irish society are examined, even though only a few of these treasures have survived. In his Preface to Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D., Professor Frank Mitchell says :

The illuminated manuscripts owe their survival to having been jealously treasured in churches and monasteries; nearly all the other objects are of the noble metals - gold, silver and bronze - and so resisted destruction from both exposure to the air and burying in the ground. The many objects of wood, iron, leather, and fabric that must have been their companions have disappeared.(3)

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What remains, and what can be seen today, is testimony to the high levels of practical skill and artistic genius in all the handicrafts of the craftworkers, the 'oes dana' of ancient Ireland. The development of native indigenous skills, techniques and tools can be traced from pre-historic times. These were supplemented by contact with foreign itinerant smiths coming to Ireland in search of gold, which was in good supply here, and remaining to practise their skills and adapt them to the native culture; by Irish travellers to Europe; by raiding parties; by missionaries bringing back artifacts and craft knowledge; by trade, and by the Viking and Norman conquests.

In architecture and stonework, developments can be traced from the megalithic tomb at Newgrange, built about 4500 years ago and regarded as one of the wonders of the ancient world. Around 1500 B.C., the great stone forts at Staigue, Grianan Aileach and at Dun Conor and Dun Aengus on the Aran Islands were built; the beehive huts and oratories, such as Gallarus, in the period from the 4th to the 7th centuries; the round towers from the 9th. to the 11th. centuries; Clonfert Cathedral and Cormac's Chapel around 1100 A.D. as well as the twelfth century Cistercian abbeys at Holy Cross, Jerpoint, and Boyle to name but a few. Examples of decorative stone carvings and sculpture range from the mysterious carvings of the megalithic tombs in the Boyne valley to the simple incised grave slabs of the early Christian period; the high crosses at Ahenny, Durrow and Clonmacnoise; the figure sculptures at Kilcooly and Corcomroe abbeys and the carved doorways and pillar capitals in many medieval churches. Many of these skills of the ancient stoneworkers have survived into modern times.

Metalwork, like agriculture, began in the Middle East and, as the qualities of new materials became widely known, the demand for ore increased. Ireland, which had an abundance of copper

and gold, was visited by people seeking these metals. The Beaker Folk, who emigrated from the Rhineland, through Britain to Ireland, around 2000 B.C. were the first large-scale metalworkers here, and around 1500 B.C. were trading finished goods with places as far away as Germany and Denmark. Because gold was plentiful at that time, there are many fine examples of gold ornaments which were made here during the Bronze Age for personal adornment. Unique to pre-historic Ireland was the gorget, a circular disc of beaten gold worn round the neck as an ornament, the size of which indicated the status of the wearer. Of these the most splendid is the Gleninsheen gold gorget. As an instance of the adventitious way some such objects came to light, it is worth recounting how this Gleninsheen gorget was found, just a few years before the book containing this account was published in 1937.

In Burren (North Clare), the dog of a young fellow, Pat Connolan, started a rabbit, which took refuge among some limestone rocks. Peering into crevices to see where it had gone, Connolan saw something shining. He drew it out, a large curved object of yellow material, and took it home. His uncle declared it to be brasswork off an old coffin and advised him that it was unlucky to have such a thing about the house, so he pitched it into a nearby bush. A couple of years later District Justice Gleeson, when rabbit shooting, happened to pass that way, and conversation turned on the occurrence of antiquities of one kind or another. Connolan called to mind the curious brass ornament; he grubbed in the bush, found it still there, and handed to the astonished magistrate, the finest gold gorget ever found in Ireland, a truly magnificent object, dating from about 700 B.C. of great size and quite perfect.(4)

Ireland had been affected by the economic changes taking place in Europe around 1200 B.C. due mainly to improvements in

agricultural techniques, the discovery of new materials and knowledge and skills learned from the eastern Mediterranean through trade and travel. Increased prosperity had generated a demand for articles for domestic use and for personal ornament. Many examples of gold ornaments which have been found here indicate skills of a high order. One of the most interesting finds, however, was a hoard of tools, nineteen in all, found at Bishopstown, in Co. Kildare, when the Poulaphuca hydro-electric dam was being constructed.(5) They were probably the tools of an itinerant bronze-smith and had lain hidden for about 3000 years. Included were axes, hammers, punches, chisels, small anvils, a saw and a tweezers, mainly of bronze. An examination of one of the axes showed that it had been made by pouring molten bronze into a two-part clay mould. The coming of Christianity to Ireland in the 5th. century A.D., and the subsequent monastic development, created new demands and presented new challenges to the native Irish craftworkers and artists. Christian Ireland demanded altar furniture, jewellery, gospel books and vestments. As the monasteries grew in power, wealth and prestige, they began to commission works of art. As well, they tended to function as urban centres and, as they were relatively safe and secure places, native Irish kings used them to store their wealth and treasures for safe-keeping.

The introduction of Christianity heralded the beginning of what has come to be known as the Golden Age, a period of peace and prosperity which lasted until the coming of the Vikings at the end of the 8th century. The finest examples of the work of Irish goldsmiths, silversmiths and coppersmiths during this period include the Ardagh Chalice, the Tara Brooch and the recently discovered Derrynaflan Chalice. All of these display workmanship of the highest order and are certainly among the finest examples of these skills in Europe. Liam de Paor says of the Tara Brooch, found incidentally, on the beach at Bettystown and not at Tara:

The small Tara Brooch can almost be regarded as a model, constructed to demonstrate every skill the eighth century jeweller knew.(6)

The Ardagh Chalice and the Tara Brooch represented the highest achievements in metalwork of the Golden Age. Items which followed were less elaborate and the decoration was less intricate and less minute. Later metalworkers were influenced by new techniques and designs introduced by the Vikings. As well, the general unrest and fall in prosperity resulting from the Norse invasion affected the quality and quantity of their output.

The monasteries were no longer safe havens for precious treasures as is evidenced by the account of a robbery at Clonmacnoise in 1129 A.D. Listed as items stolen from the high altar there were:

a model of Solomon's Temple, an engraved silver chalice burnished with gold, a drinking horn, a silver cup, three gifts of Turlough O'Connor, a silver goblet, a silver cup adorned with a gold cross, a drinking horn embellished with gold.(7)

And these were only part of the treasures of Clonmacnoise. The end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th. century was, however, quite a prolific period for all forms of Irish art. The items produced during this period were much influenced by Scandanavian designs brought in by the Vikings and include the Cross of Cong, which contained a relic of the True Cross, the Shrine of St. Patrick's Bell and many croziers said to be without parallel in Europe. This work, however, never had the same level of embellishment as that of the Golden Age.(8)

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Possibly the greatest examples of early Irish craftsmanship, involving the skills of scribe, calligrapher, artist, painter/decorator and bookbinder are to be found in the illuminated mass books and bibles, produced to serve the numerous monasteries resulting from the spread of Christianity. Ornamented books for use in churches were common in eastern Mediterranean countries and in mainland Europe but the Irish manuscripts were something apart. What is most remarkable is that, apart from Ogham, writing did not appear in Ireland until the time of St. Patrick, yet within 300 years the greatest examples of the calligrapher's art in the world, in the form of the Book of Durrow (c.600 A.D.), the Book of Kells (c. 750 A.D.) and the now lost Book Of Kildare appeared. Commenting on these developments one writer says:

Many of the bibles and mass books were elaborately ornamented after the fashion in vogue in the eastern Church and in mainland Europe, but the richness and complexity of the Irish design set it as a thing apart. In the art of illumination it represents a climax never since reached and unparalleled up to that time. It is all the more remarkable in that it suddenly appears before us fully developed without preliminary stages and without sources to which it can be traced.(9)

The Book of Kells is so famous, - it is very attractively treated in Archbishop Simms', Exploring the Book of Kells (10) - that it is not intended to dwell on it here, other than to quote Liam de Paor:

A comparatively small number of motifs and manuscript painter's pigments have been combined and endlessly recombined in minute and dazzlingly elaborate webs of ornament, geometry, whimsy, and near-madness in this astonishing work, . . . (11)

Giraldus Cambrensis, who expressed little regard generally for the native Irish, appears to have seen and examined the Book of Kildare. Writing around 1200 A.D., he declared that what he had seen in the Book 'must have been the work, not of men but of angels' (12). That one of the oldest manuscripts, the Book of Durrow, (c. 700 A.D.), survived at all is a miracle in itself. It is named after the monastery at Durrow, near Tullamore, founded by St. Columba in 533 A.D. and was probably written in the scriptorium there. After the monastery was suppressed in 1547, the Book appears to have been kept in the locality and was used at one stage by a local farmer as a cure for sick cattle. The 'cure' consisted of dipping the Book in water which was then given to the cattle to drink! Even when it was presented to Trinity College, shortly after 1652, it was still not safe as the shrine in which the Book was kept, and which was made of silver plates with a silver cross, disappeared in 1689, when the College was occupied by the military and has not been heard of since. That the Book survived the 'cure' is in itself a tribute to the craftsmanship of the original 7th. century scribes (13).

While stonework, metalwork and manuscripts have survived to prove the quality and the extent of early Irish craftwork, all of these must have been complemented in their time by articles of the same high standard in iron, wood, leather, cloth, glass, painting and pottery. What little still survives, and references in later texts, show that workers in these materials possessed skills of a high order. Examples include a large round decorative leather shield dated around 700 B.C., and a wooden former (a pattern or shaping device) for making similar shields of the same period, and also a large leather satchel (c.1500 A.D.) made to hold the Book of Armagh. One of the earliest industries in Ireland was the manufacture of woollen garments, and fragments of woven cloth have been found which are thought to date from about 700 B.C. There were Brehon Laws



which specified the colour and ornamental texture of the clothes to be worn by the various grades in society, including braids and borders. At one time these were made by tablet weaving, using as a handtool small square tablets of wood or bone with holes at each corner through which the threads were fed.(14) Ironwork was slow to develop here, mainly because the smiths were used to the techniques of casting bronze and had difficulty in adjusting to the forging of iron. The oldest example of early ironwork is the Bell of St. Patrick, known as the Bell of the Will, and said to have been removed from the Saint's tomb by Colmcille. Craftworkers had mastered enamelling, involving the use of molten glass, at an early date as is evidenced by the enamel work on the Ardagh Chalice and the Tara Brooch. It appears that parchment and horn were used instead of glass in early Irish churches. In 1353 A.D., a stained glass window was erected in St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny for which the Papal Nuncio, Rinuccini, is said to have offered £700 in 1648. The window was totally destroyed two years later but fragments can be seen in the Kilkenny Museum. Apart from the book illuminations, little remains of early Irish decorative painting, but Cogitosus, in his account of the life of St. Brigid, written around the middle of the 7th. century, described her church at Kildare as 'decorated and painted with figures', and there are indications that, at some stage, the High Crosses were painted. As early as 2500 B.C., pots were made from fired clay and used for burials and cooking purposes but wooden utensils were normally used for eating and drinking. Clay moulds were used for casting bronze for weapons and ornamental work, and glazed floor tiles, examples of which can be seen on part of the original floor at Duiske Abbey in Co. Kilkenny, were also produced.

**Early Irish Society:**

There is abundant evidence, therefore, that craftsmanship of a high order was practised in Ireland from the earliest times. The type of society that existed here provided a structure for passing on skills from generation to generation. Added to this was an enlightened system of patronage which created a demand for the many treasures that were produced. Society in early Ireland has been described by D. A. Binchy in a Thomas Davis Lecture, delivered in 1953, as 'tribal, rural, hierarchical, and familiar (using this word in its oldest sense to mean a society in which the family, not the individual, is the unit) - a complete contrast to the unitary, urbanised, egalitarian and individualistic society of our time'.(15) From the information that can be gleaned from the records, which had been written down by about 700 A.D., it is possible to get a fairly good idea of this society. There were about 150 tuatha or petty kingdoms in the country each with its own king and each consisting of no more than 2000 to 3000 people. It was a graded society which ranged from the king down through various grades of freemen to the serf and the slave. The aristocracy were farmers, noblemen who held land and lent land and stock to clients, the number of clients determining their status. These clients paid rent in kind and provided services in return. They farmed their land rearing cattle, sheep and pigs and growing cereals. The aristocracy were also the warrior class and, like the monasteries of a later period, were patrons of the poets, the artists and the craftsmen. These had a special caste of their own between commoner and nobleman. They were known as the 'oes dana', the men of art, and were closely associated with the aristocracy. They were, in fact, the professional people of society whose special skills gave them a status beyond that due to them by birth. They included the poet, musician, historian, physician, lawyer, wright and the smith working in precious metals and jewellery. One old Irish text,

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Senbriathra Fithail, indicated the special regard in which art or skill was held with the saying 'an art is better than an inheritance of land'.(16) It is of interest to note, too, that in times of war, the person, lands and chattels of the man of art had an immunity, somewhat like the concept of sanctuary in church property. And while the average person had no rights outside the tuath, the 'oes dana' could travel around providing their services. In a society where, according to an old text, Tecosca Cormaic, 'every commoner is low', the man of art was highly regarded, had special privileges and status and, in the case of some skills such as that of a poet, was regarded as a semi-nobleman. It was, therefore, to the advantage of an individual to learn a skill, to develop it and retain it, not only for himself, but for his family.

As in the ancient civilisations in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, trades were hereditary and this was in accordance with the law. Individuals with above-average skills in particular areas gave up their subsistence farming activities and earned their living by using their skills in the service of others. These skills were transmitted from father to son and over time, as the son learned all the skills of his father and added his own, (acquired through contacts with others or through travel, and through the use of new tools and materials), an increasing accumulation of expertise was amassed. This, being the main asset of the craft worker, was jealously guarded. In Uraiceacht na Riar, a translation from one of the ancient Brehon Law texts in Corpus Iuris Hibernici (17) is given as follows:

Craftsmen since they have first been are obliged to have a source for he is no craftsman without a proper origin as has been proclaimed. It has been fixed in the law of Roigne that everyone will be able to practise his craft.(18)

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It was also provided in the ancient laws, that for members of a family to be recognised as having hereditary rights to an occupation, the grandfather and the father of the family would have had to have practised it. If a person did not fulfil this requirement then his 'honour price', and consequently his status, was reduced. Again, failure to follow the occupation of his father resulted in a person's losing his freedom. This point, in relation to poets, is made in Triad 167:

Three free ones that make slaves of themselves: a lord who sells his land, a queen who goes to a boor, a poet's son who abandons his father's craft. (19)

The word 'apprentice' does not appear in English documents until around 1660,(20) although 'prentice' appears from about 1330. The current Irish word 'printiseach' appears for the first time in an Irish manuscript dictionary about 1850.(21) The ancient Irish word, 'felmac', is thought to convey the concept of a young person learning an art, a skill, a science or 'secrets' from a father who could be a foster-father. In the Ancient Laws of Ireland - Senchus Mor, an explanation of the derivation of 'felmac' is given but some of the translations of the Senchus Mar are now considered less reliable than formerly believed.(22) In his Guide to Early Irish Law, Fergus Kelly suggests the word 'inol', one of the lowest grades of commoner, whose 'honour price', one fleece was the lowest of all.(23)

#### **Fosterage:**

It is likely that, in the context of the tuath and kin, the concept of apprenticeship as commonly understood did not exist but that fosterage substituted for it. Polygamy was common in early Irish society and even after the introduction of Christianity, although disapproved of by the Church, it

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persisted for some time. The presence of several sons or daughters, possibly by different wives, in the household of a nobleman, was not conducive to harmony and the higher grades of society sent their children to other relatives within the kin to be educated and trained in what would now be regarded as the 'life skills' appropriate to their status. According to the law text, Cain Lanamma, fosterage, with or without a fee (fosterage of affection), was a binding legal contract and where a fee was paid, it was covered by the Law of Fosterage Payment. Fosterage, which was also intended to build good inter-family relationships, normally started for both sexes at seven years of age and ended at fourteen for girls and seventeen for boys, when both were regarded as having reached adulthood. The following excerpt from the law text on fosterage taken from the Senchus Mar illustrates the position, due allowance being made for difficulties with the translations of ancient words :

The social connection that is considered between the foster pupil and the literary foster-father is that the latter is to instruct without reserve and to prepare him for his degree and to chastise him without severity, to feed and clothe him while he is learning his legitimate profession, unless he obtains it from another person; and from the school of Fenius Forsaith, this custom prevails; and the foster pupil is to assist his tutor in poverty and support him in his old age and the honour price of the degree for which he prepares him and all the gains of his art while he is learning and the first earnings of his art after he leaves the house of his tutor are to be given to the tutor and the literary foster-father has the power of pronouncing judgment and proof and witness upon the foster pupil as has the father on his son and the Church upon the tenant of ecclesiastical lands.(24)

There are many similarities between this quotation from a law text of the Brehons and the medieval apprentice indenture, except, of course, that the Brehon contract would be an implied oral one. The fee paid for fosterage varied with the status of the natural father and with the sex of the child, a higher fee being paid in respect of the son of a king than for the son of a small farmer. For some reason, a higher fee was always paid in respect of a girl. In a normal fosterage, where the foster-son was known as a 'dalta', the training and education to be given was appropriate to the rank and sex of the fosterchild. A girl would receive training in domestic work, needlework and the making of clothes while that for a boy of high rank would include 'board games and outdoor sports', and for a boy of lower rank would consist of farmwork. However some boys, instead of learning their trade from their father, who might be a poet, lawyer, wright or physician, would be sent away to learn it from another master (fithidir - a teacher of poetry or a craft) of the same trade for a fee. Girls rarely received training during fosterage in anything other than domestic work, but a craftsman without sons might have his daughter trained in his profession, and there are references in the old texts to the woman poet, the woman wright - the bansaer - and the woman physician who seems to have functioned as a midwife.

In some cases masters ran training schools. This was particularly so in the case of brehons, historians, physicians and in pre-Christian times, druids. In the Tain Bo Cuailnge there is an account of the druid Cathbad, who had a training school in which he had 'many pupils whom he instructs in the art of divination'.(25) Before the advent of writing, pupils had to learn by rote in metrical form, but with the advent of writing the copying of manuscripts for their own use was part of their training, 'but to judge by the comments penned on the margins by bored scholars not a very popular part of the course'. (26) In the scriptoria of the monasteries, when

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important texts were being copied, it was the practice that the junior scribe did the initial work, and then the text was corrected by a senior scribe. On one page of the Book of Kells a senior scribe has obviously corrected the grammar and spelling of the original scribe.(27) The monasteries were the nearest approach to urban settlements that existed prior to the Viking settlements, and in an artist's impression of what Clonmacnoise looked like around 1200, the enclosing wall is shown lined with houses and workshops. In these monastic establishments there must have lived many tradesmen and their families to service the needs of the community. It was probably in such a workshop in Armagh that Cuduilig O Inmainen and his two sons made, in bronze, gold and silver, the Shrine of St. Patrick's Bell, on which Cuduilig identified himself. It is probable, too, that, in planning the decorative work for the Shrine, he and his sons practised on bone trial pieces, often referred to as 'apprentice pieces', to perfect their designs before using precious metals. Possibly the most graphic account of the training of lawyers and physicians is given in Campion's History of Ireland of 1571:

I have seen them where they kept Schoole, ten in some one chamber, grovelling upon couches of straw, their Bookes at their noses, themselves lying flat prostrate and so to chaunte out their lessons by peece-meale, being the most part lustie fellows of twenty five years and upwards.(28)

From a study of the ancient law texts there is ample evidence that separate texts existed governing the qualifications, duties and responsibilities of various categories in the 'oes dana', the professional classes. For example, Uraicecht na Riar, 'the primer of the stipulations', sets out the qualifications of the various grades of poets. A similar text, Bretha Dian Checht, 'the judgements of Dian Checht', deals with the work of the physician. Urcailte Bretheman, 'the forbidden

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things of a judge' is a law text which specifies how a judge should act and lists the legal texts which he should know. Among these are listed 'the judgements of Dian Cecht, of Goibniu, of Credine and of Luchtaine', mythological physician, blacksmith, coppersmith and wright respectively and already referred to as 'the noblest of the Tuatha De Danann'. Bretha Credine, the law text relating to the craft of coppersmith, is known to have existed at one time, as it is referred to in other documents and it is likely that similar texts for the blacksmith, and the wright also existed.(29) Unfortunately these have now been lost but, Uraicecht na Riar, lays down the requirements for poets and this may give some indication of what these lost law texts might have contained. It must be appreciated, too, that these laws or judgements were originally in oral and verse form and had to be learned by rote, often in a question and answer form. It was only after the introduction of writing that they were written down, often by pupils in law schools as part of their apprenticeship. Some examples from Uraicecht na Riar will illustrate, in relation to poets, the points being made:

How many grades of poet are there? Not difficult; seven; ollam, anruth, cli, cano, dos, macfuirmid, fochloc.

What is the competence, grade and honour price of each of them from great to small? Not difficult; the competence of an ollam first; he has 350 compositions (that is 50 for each grade), he is knowledgeable in all historical science and he is knowledgeable in the jurisprudence of Irish law. His honour price is 40 sets .

How is a grade conferred on a poet? Not difficult; he shows his compositions to an ollam - and he has seven grades of knowledge - and the king receives him in his full grade in which the ollam declares him to be on the



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basis of his compositions and his guiltlessness and his purity, that is purity of learning and purity of mouth and purity of hands and marital union and purity consisting of being innocent of theft and plunder and illegality and purity of body that he have only one wife for one perishes through dark (illicit) co-habitation aside from one chaste (woman) on lawful nights.(30)

In the earlier period, the ollamh, as well as being the highest grade of poet, also held a position or appointment in the tuath, but in later years he was a 'professor' or highest grade. The title of 'fili' (anruth), second in the grade of poet, normally had three requirements, family background, ability and formal training. He or she required 175 compositions, was considered to be at the midpoint in the craft and had an honour price of 20 sets, the equivalent of 10 milch cows. In relation to the number of grades that existed, there were seven grades in the Church, seven grades of commoner and seven grades of poet. Whether this grading system extended to other members of the 'oes dana' is not known but in a law text the question is put and answered as follows:

On what basis have the lay grades been divided? On the basis of correspondence with the Church grades, for any grade that is in the Church it is right that a corresponding one should be in the tuath for the sake of proof by oath, or denial by oath, or evidence or judgement from one to another.(31)

In the early Irish legal system, the oath or evidence of a superior grade carried more weight than that of an inferior. Whether or not a similiar grading system applied to all persons who engaged in crafts in the tuath is not known, and the lost law texts might have helped, but the likelihood is that it did, and the continuing research into this whole area by the Dublin

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Institute for Advanced Studies, particularly into the 'oes dana', will, no doubt, throw further light on this.

It is, however, possible to glean some information in this matter by quoting some of the Triads of Ireland assembled and translated from many old Irish texts by Kuno Meyer. These triads are somewhat like our present day 'sean fhocail' and have been defined as 'a triadic arrangement of sayings of Irishmen'. Here are some examples referring to crafts:

76. The three hands that are best in the world: the hand of a good carpenter, the hand of a skilled woman, the hand of a good smith.

118. The three things that constitute a good carpenter: joining together without warping, agility with the compass, a well measured stroke.

119. The three things that constitute a physician: a complete cure, leaving no blemish behind, a painless examination.

122. The three that constitute a harper: a tune to make you cry, a tune to make you laugh, a tune to put you asleep.

148. Three renovators of the world; the womb of a woman, a cow's udder, a smith's moulding block.

Finally, in a footnote in the Senchus Mar, there is a reference indicating what the apprentice was expected to do in the household of his master during his training:

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During the term of the learning i.e. while they were serving their apprenticeship, the pupils or apprentices were obliged to do all sorts of menial work for the master tradesman such as putting out his dung, reap his corn, feed his pigs or do any other kind of menial work (of) the 'fuider'(semi-free) or 'daer'(unfree) tenant.(32)

**Summary:**

To summarise: the builders of Newgrange around 3000 B.C. were obviously persons of great intellectual capacity, using what could be regarded, for the time, as sophisticated technologies and superior organisational skills informed by a vision beyond our understanding. On to these, as the centuries unfolded, were grafted new skills, new techniques as new materials became available and new tools, the product of native ingenuity and inventiveness. They were influenced by many external contacts and profoundly affected by the advent of Christianity and the peace and prosperity that followed for hundreds of years. A climax was reached in the Golden Age, only to be shattered with the coming of the Vikings in 795 A.D. These pagan invaders plundered the unprotected monasteries which contained most of the treasures made by Irish craftsmen. However, they also built towns at the river mouths and developed trading links with the Norse countries. These contacts introduced new artistic designs and techniques, and the native Irish style was supplanted by the Hiberno-Viking style in the 9th. century. While this never reached the same standard as that of the Golden Age, many fine examples among Irish treasures belong to the six centuries after the first raids. The skills of the craftsmen were altered but were not lost, and the late 11th. and early 12th. centuries were prolific periods for Irish art. Although Irish society was based largely on petty kingdoms and on the monasteries, there was a common culture and language and

a common, though extremely complex, legal system. Acquisition of skill was hereditary with the son, and sometimes the daughter, inheriting and building on the skill of the father, supplemented by a system of fosterage, not unlike apprenticeship, and with formal training for some occupations. The effectiveness of this training can be judged by visits to museums in Ireland, England and continental Europe and to our own ancient monasteries and churches. The Anglo-Norman invasion was to have, on the whole, an opposite effect. Native Irish craftsmanship declined and the new invaders in their manors and the Cistercians in their monasteries did not provide the patronage of previous centuries. The instability that followed, the wars and the struggle to survive were not conducive to artistic endeavour. Goldsmiths and silversmiths came from England to ply their trades in the newly developing Irish towns and, as we shall see later, laws were enacted to prevent the native Irish becoming apprentices. The cathedrals and abbeys built after 1230 A.D. were English in style and many English settled in what had become conquered territories. Christchurch and St. Patrick's Cathedrals were, for example, the products of English masons. A long period of decline followed and, although there was an effort at Gaelic revival in the 15th. century, when the Normans had 'become more Irish than the Irish themselves', much of the work was of very poor quality, and the native Irish goldsmiths and silversmiths could not match the work of the early Christian period. As Roger Stalley puts it:

By contemporary European standards, Irish metal-work of this period was proficiently executed in a variety of techniques. But in contrast to the extraordinary delicacy of Irish work of the seventh and eight centuries, it seems heavy and coarse. A glance at the Ardagh chalice or the Tara brooch reveals the enormous gulf. Yet, though it lacks the earlier subtlety, the bolder ornament of the

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twelfth century often provides a more immediate visual impact. (33)

The techniques and the skills had been lost in less than 200 years and the native Irish system of training had almost disappeared. The advent of the Tudor regime, in 1485, and the attempt, in 1534, to force on Ireland a reformed state church, followed by the land confiscations, in 1556, provided further negative influences as did the Renaissance. The effects of both of these have been summarised by Frank Mitchell in his introduction to Treasures of Irish Art, as follows:

Irish art was overwhelmed by the Renaissance influences that the Tudor noblemen brought with them and never regained its earlier vitality.(34)

As will be seen later, the position of native Irish craftsmanship was to reach its nadir at a much later period, but first, the introduction and operation of the guilds and their associated apprenticeship system must be examined.

## **2. The Guild System and Apprenticeship**

### **Overview:**

Sir Henry Maine in his Early History of Institutions, refers to one source which claims a Celtic etymology for the word guild and that this can be traced to grazing partnerships, something similar to the Mesta in Spain, which were common in ancient Ireland. But early Irish society was not conducive to the formation of guilds.(35) There were no towns and no coinage until after the arrival of the Vikings. The kin system was

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dominant and the tuath, consisting of some 2000/3000 people, was the political entity. The legal system based on the Brehon Laws - which were pagan in origin and were in oral form until they were written down and 'purified' shortly after the coming of St. Patrick - applied in the greater part of the country until the middle of the 17th. century. By the end of that century, the Brehons and the Ollamhs appear to have died out. On the other hand, the code of English Law, introduced in the 12th century, hardly applied outside the Pale. The guild system was imported by the Normans, firstly with the establishment of the Gild Merchant, normally by royal charter as the king needed money, to be followed later by the Craft Guilds. In 1171, Henry II granted the men of Bristol the city of Dublin, and, twenty-one years afterwards, the citizens were granted 'among other liberties, ... all their reasonable gilds as the burgesses of Bristol'.(36) A Gild Merchant had been set up by the end of the century. The records also show that, in all, 38 other towns in Ireland eventually had a Gild Merchant, including such places as Athboy, Inistioge and Jamestown, all of which have since declined in importance. In addition, other towns which had been granted royal charters for Corporations also had Gild Merchants. To help give an insight into what these charters contained the following is an extract from that granted to the Corporation of Clonmel by James I in 1603, and by which the affairs of the town were regulated until the Municipal Reform Act in 1842:

We grant unto the said Mayor, Bayliffs, Ffreeburgesses and Commons of the said Borrough and their sucessors for ever that they may have a certain Guild of Merchants and a Guild Hall to the same belonging, within the said Borrough AND that no foreign or strange Merchant or any other whatsoever who is not of their Guild aforesaid, may have or occupy or in any wise retail sell or buy Merchandries, Mercimonies or wares of any kind or sort soever they be

within the Borrough aforesaid or the Ffranchises, Burgagery or Liberties thereof without the special lycence of ye said Mayor .....

WE GRANT to the said Mayor, Bayliffs, Ffreeburgesses and Commonalty of ye said town and Borrough that they and their Sucessors may divide, distinguish themselves into severall Guilds or fraternities according to their severall conditions arts and misteries and that every Guild have and may use one distinct Ensign ..... have and build one distinct hall ..... and also that every Guild or Fraternity yearly forever, may elect chose and constitute to itself one Warden or Master ..... who may exercise the office of Warden or Master for one entire year and noe more ..... (37)

Based on Royal Charters such as these and other royal grants, many of the towns established here following the Norman invasion set up corporations and guilds and made their own ordinances and municipal laws which governed them up to 1842. These laws, in quite a number of cases, dealt with apprentices

#### **Guilds in Dublin:**

The following interesting information in relation to the operations of the guilds in Dublin has been assembled from the Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin by J.T. and Lady Gilbert(38), and from The Medieval Gild System by the Rev. George Clune.(39) The Dublin Guild Merchant, known as the Holy Trinity Guild included craftsmen, and there is no mention of any other guild in the City until the 15th. century. At the end

of the 16th. century, however, there were 21 crafts organised into 17 guilds, some of which were composite guilds like the Bricklayers and Plasterers Guild, known as St. Bartholomew's. At the beginning, and for a long time, the native Irish were excluded both from the Gild Merchant and from the craft guilds. Later, after the Reformation, Catholics were not admitted to full membership. From the start, then, the original concept of fraternity was absent and a regime of exclusiveness prevailed. Later on, a system referred to as 'quarter brothers' allowed Catholics and the native Irish, on the payment of a quarterly fee, to practise the craft of the guild, but they had no vote in guild elections and could not hold office. This attitude to the native Irish and to Catholics was peculiar to Irish guilds. They became more and more exclusive and this was one of the factors which contributed to their abolition later.

**Apprentices and the Irish Guilds:**

Wherever there were guilds there were apprentices, although there were also apprentices with common law indentures in places where there were no guilds. There were many ordinances in relation to apprentices enacted in Dublin. One of the earliest, in 1454, specified that all apprentices had to have a jake bow, a sheath, a sallet (a helmet) and sword of his own before he could become a freeman and he had to muster twice a year under the master of Holy Trinity Guild to defend the City. There are many entries in the records to show that apprentices had been mustered to repel the native Irish 'foreigners'. In the same year, 1454, all persons of Irish blood, including apprentices, were ordered to leave the City within one month and no master could take on an Irish apprentice. Later, a law to the effect that no papist could be taken on as an apprentice was passed. In an ordinance of 1527, apprentices had to be registered in a register kept by the City Recorder, the



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registration fee being four pence, plus a further two shillings for making out an indenture. Evidently the city fathers needed revenue! Apparently fairly strict rules in relation to personal appearance and conduct applied also. Those apprentices who did not get their hair cut, or who engaged in pilfering from their masters, were to be stripped naked and flogged with green birchen rods in the Guildhall by the porters (who were to be disguised), under the supervision of the Guildmaster and in the presence of other apprentices. There were also stocks for the punishment of those who misbehaved. In 1573, the period of apprenticeship was fixed at seven years, with a further three as a journeyman, before entitlement to become a member of the guild. In the same year, it was ordained that new apprentices had to be formally presented at the next quarterly meeting of the guild in an effort to control numbers, because 'so many Irish natives and others of simple birth are allowed apprentices contrary to the statutes of the realme'. In another effort to control numbers, a fine of £40 was imposed on any member who took on an unnecessary apprentice. The position of Catholics worsened after the Reformation. In 1662, the Common Council of Dublin decreed that no one should be admitted to any of the guilds in the City unless a Protestant, and that no freeman take on an apprentice 'but such as are or will be or continue to be in the Protestant Religion'. Ten years later a master was fined £100 for taking on a papist apprentice, and in 1679, the concession of 'quarter brothers' was withdrawn from Catholics and even existing members of that category had their right to work at their craft withdrawn.

In practice, the day to day operations of the Irish guilds mirrored those of their English and Continental counterparts. The Masters and Wardens had similar functions in relation to fixing wages and prices, powers of search, the handling of disputes between guild members and overseeing of apprentices. All had their meeting places, one being over St. Audoen's Arch

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and another at Taylors Hall in Dublin. They had their Guild Chests, that of the Dublin Guild of Bricklayers and Plasterers being inscribed as follows:

The publicke chest for the use of the Corporation of Bricklayers and Plasterers, William Botsford Master; Symon Forester, John O'Toole Wardens, Anno Domini 1670.(40)

They held their quarterly dinners, attended religious services, (after the Reformation these had to be Protestant), had their patron saints, their banners and took part in many religious and civic processions. The following is a graphic account of the banners :

Mounted on great horse-drawn floats, and straining like frigates' sails in the wind they moved perilously through our streets on all such national and municipal occasions until the advent of the electric tram standards and wires made their progress impossible.(41)

The guilds provided the freemen of the City and elected members of the Common Council where each guild had an order of precedence. They took part in the civic ceremony of 'riding the franchises', an annual perambulation of the boundaries of the City. The story of the actions of the 'Apprentice Boys of Derry' in the defence of their city is well known. Not so well known, perhaps, was the action of the apprentice boys of Dublin in defence of their craft. A number of French Huguenot refugee craftsmen arrived in Dublin and were admitted to the franchise of the City by Acts of Parliament in 1682 and 1685. The apprentices of Dublin, 'always ready to take the offensive against anything - from a new bridge to a newcomer - which threatened their interests', and often with the tacit support of their masters, decided that they would assemble to eject the Frenchmen. The Governor of the City was told and, to forestall

the apprentices' plan, arranged to have the horse and foot soldiers called out and guards posted at Kilmainham.(42)

At least one guild, The Company of Goldsmiths of Dublin, had apprentice members, and presumably guild members, in towns other than Dublin. The History of Clonmel notes that Robt. Cuffe was apprenticed to Hercules Baer in the town in 1705, according to the registers of the Dublin Goldsmiths.(43) . This guild was very active in looking after its apprentices and there were many meetings of the guild to consider complaints by apprentices against their masters.(44) Guilds had their secret rituals and initiation ceremonies. Extensive use of masons marks occurred in Ireland and examples can be seen in Mellifont, Kilcooly, Holycross and Duiske monasteries.(45) The Irish craftsmen of the Middle Ages had their own secret language known as Bearlagair na Saer, which has been translated as 'The Vernacular of the Masons' and seems to have been in use mainly in the Munster area. Their word for an apprentice was 'geab-eis'; a man who had not served an apprenticeship is referred to as 'coult' and 'airig' meant a mason or a craftsman. (46)

#### **Decline of the Guilds in Ireland:**

In the 17th century, the guilds controlled practically all the trade and manufacture in Dublin but, even at that stage, the signs of decay were there. By excluding from the beginning the native Irish, and later the Catholics, they had, in effect, created a trojan horse for themselves within a City where the great majority were Irish and Catholic. These, being outside the guilds, could not be effectively controlled and worked at their craft 'illicitly'. As happened in other countries abuses developed, and the fraternal spirit, which from the very start was weak in the Irish guilds, for all practical purposes disappeared. Journeymen felt that they were being excluded from

membership and in Dublin and also in Limerick, where there were 15 guilds in 1769, they began to set up their own journeymen clubs which were sternly opposed by the masters. These were later to develop into the craft unions. Admission to the guild by 'grace and favour' in order to become a freeman of the City, and so pursue civic or parliamentary ambitions, eventually made a nonsense of guild membership. Much of this was officially uncovered in the investigations of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners appointed in 1833. For instance, it was reported that of the 104 members of the Dublin Guild of Bricklayers in that year, there were fifteen craftsmen, seven journeymen, fifteen who had been craftsmen but were now in other employment, and sixty-five who had no connection with the craft and who had been admitted by 'grace and favour'. These included barristers, attorneys, clerks, architects and others. Even some Masters and Wardens had never been craftsmen, as was discovered sometime earlier, when the Government sought the services of the Master of the Guild of Bricklayers to inspect a recently erected public building. It was found that he was, in fact, an attorney and had never been a bricklayer. An officer of the smiths' guild gave evidence to the Commission that his guild 'did everything in its power to keep out Catholics and bad Protestants'. Even though the Irish Parliament in 1793 removed the ban on the acceptance of Catholics as freemen of Dublin, it was only in 1836, forty-three years later, that a Catholic was elected a freeman. As a result of the Commission's findings and of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1840, which gave municipal franchise to all male householders with a valuation of £10 or more, the right of the guilds to direct representation on municipal authorities was abolished.

However, the guilds still retained their ancient charters, but, once their privileged political position was destroyed, they were no longer useful to their current members who deserted them. The abandoned, but still legal, guilds began to be taken

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over by tradesmen and journeymen, who, even though their interests and those of the apprentices had long since been largely ignored by them, still longed for the protection that the medieval guilds had provided. These trade union 'guilds', (and they were still legally chartered corporations), began a campaign to get their employers to adhere to guild rules. A case taken to the courts by the bricklayers and plasterers, who had united under the old Guild of St. Bartholomew, to assert the corporate rights of their Guild, was successful. Further proceedings were then taken by other tradesmens' groups to force their employers to comply with guild regulations. However, as a result of action by employers, and with the help of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Parliament enacted a law, in 1846, ending, for ever, the power the guilds had exercised for six and a half centuries.(47) There was one exception: The Company of Goldsmiths' of Dublin was still responsible for assaying the gold and silver of Ireland as it had done for centuries, the powers of its original charter reinforced by various acts of Parliament and Government orders over the years. 'Why it should have survived is obvious; it was needed whereas others were not'.(48) After the abolition of the guilds, the operative members formed themselves into trade societies but still retained their links with the past. The Regular Dublin Operative Coopers' Society, which traced its origins to 1501, voluntarily ended its existence at a meeting in 1983 and presented it's charter, banner and oldest minute book to the Guinness Museum. All its other records were given to the Labour History Society.(49) The Bricklayers Union in Dublin still retains the formal name of The Ancient Guild of Incorporated Brick and Stonelayers' Trade Union and the present City of Cork Operative Society of Masons traces its origins to a charter issued in 1696, accidentally burned some years ago. In its rules, which were ratified at a meeting in the Cork Mechanics' Institute in 1874, the following two related to apprentices:

Rule XV. That every apprentice shall be bound by an indenture and have his name enrolled on the Society's books; and he must prove an honest servitude before being admitted a member of this Society.

Rule XVI. That neither master nor journeyman shall take an apprentice, except his own son or the son of an approved deceased Mason.(50)

The emerging unions now took over the apprenticeship functions of the old guilds: insisting on indentures and restricting entry mainly to sons of members. They also tried to control numbers and the 'flooding of the trade' by enforcing long apprenticeship periods as well as ratios of apprentices to tradesmen. During the 19th. century, the craft unions, in particular, grew in strength, especially in the towns and cities, where they sometimes amalgamated with British unions. They formed, firstly, local federations of unions in places like Dublin and Limerick and, towards the end of the century, local trades councils. Finally, in 1894, the Irish Trade Union Congress was formed. From a position in 1803 when any combination of workers in Ireland was illegal - this statute was repealed in 1824 - organised workers had reached a position where they were being invited to make submissions to Government bodies, such as the Samuelson Commission on Technical Instruction, in relation to the training of their members, including their apprentices.

#### **Mechanics' Institutes:**

But even as the shutters came down on the guilds, other doors were being opened. The Mechanics' Institute movement, which began in Glasgow in 1800, when George Birkbeck started classes for workmen and artisans, soon spread to Ireland. As early as

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1826, there was a report of a lecture given in the Mechanics' Institute in Ennis. In 1827, a meeting to set up a Mechanics' Institute in Waterford was held and, in 1828, one was opened in Nenagh. In researching material for his thesis on the Mechanics' Institutes in Ireland Before 1855, Kieran Byrne found evidence of such Institutes in twenty-two towns in Ireland but says that it was not possible to identify all that were established here.(51) The purpose of these Institutes was to provide classes for workmen and artisans who wished to learn the scientific principles underlying their trades. They were established on a voluntary basis by enlightened people, concerned about the general level of education and its effect on the standard of living of workers, and who recognised the importance of education for both social and industrial advancement. The Institutes consisted essentially of a library, a reading room, a lecture room and later a 'model' room, and could be regarded as the first attempt at technical education aimed at workers in Ireland. Initially, the lectures provided were relevant to the work of artisans. In the Clonmel Mechanics' Institute founded in 1842 - Charles Bianconi was one of the founders - lectures on the Construction of Simple Machines, the Laws of Motion and the Laws of Sound were given by Professor Robert Kane of the Royal Dublin Society. In the rules of some Institutes provision was made for apprentices, whose masters were members, to be admitted free of charge to the lectures. Later, however, the Institutes were taken over by the middle class. They became more academic and lost their original artisan orientation. It would not be difficult to imagine how the ordinary artisan in Clonmel might have responded to a lecture on the 'Obligations of English Literature to Female Writers', apart from the novelty of listening to a female lecturer, Miss Clara Lucas Balfour. Another difficulty was that the standard of literacy among the working class at the time would have restricted the value of the well-stocked library and the reading room which probably had a greater variety of daily

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newspapers than would be available in Clonmel today. The Mechanics' Institute library there became, in 1899, the Clonmel Municipal Library, while in 1902, the remainder of the building became the first Clonmel Technical School.(52)

**Educational Developments:**

The state-funded National School system had been set up in 1831. One of the results of this, shown by the 1881 Census, was that the percentage of illiterates in Ireland had fallen from 52.7% in 1841 to 25.2% of the population. Though the curriculum content consisted mainly of 'The Three Rs' and its primary aim was the achievement of basic literacy and numeracy, nevertheless, from a very early stage there was a concern that some practical education and training should be provided in the national schools. The fourth annual Report of the Commissioners of National Education (1837) outlined the approach to be adopted:

Our object is not to teach trades but to facilitate a perfect learning of them by explaining the principles upon which they depend and habituating young persons to expertness in the use of their hands (53)

One of the Board's earliest ventures in this regard was in the area of agricultural education. In 1838, the Commissioners opened a model farm at Glasnevin to provide training in agriculture for national teachers. This was followed by the setting up of thirty-six model agricultural schools between 1840 and 1858, while about sixty ordinary national schools had farms attached. However, the experiment was not a success and it was discontinued in the 1870's, following the Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education, 1868-1870 (Powis).



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**Industrial and Reformatory Schools:**

Industrial education was provided by a variety of sources. Independent Industrial Schools run by religious orders, such as the Printing School in Bonmahon in Co. Waterford, and many schools run by nuns, where lacemaking, weaving and crochet work were taught to girls, were established. In 1858, the provisions of the Reformatory Schools Act were applied to Ireland and a number of existing voluntary corrective establishments were certified as Reformatory Schools for young offenders. These, and the Industrial Schools, which were introduced in 1869 and which catered for orphaned and abandoned children, were considered to be very successful in providing trade, handicraft and horticultural training for young persons. Even the poorhouses were making a contribution. A report (54) showed that in September 1853, a total of 3196 boys, between the ages of nine and fifteen years, out of a population of 12,320 such inmates, were receiving an average of five hours industrial training per day as shoemakers, tailors, weavers, carpenters, tinsmiths and in other trades. They were, of course, receiving this training in the manufacture of articles for internal use in the workhouses. Some were later apprenticed by the parish authorities to employers to complete a formal indentured apprenticeship and were known as 'parish apprentices' or 'poor law apprentices'. One such example from an earlier period, was John McCann of Athboy who was apprenticed to a local hatter for seven years. In his indenture it was provided that his master, Luke Cregan, at the end of his apprenticeship:

shall provide a good new suit of clothes, two shirts and one pair of shoes and stockings and a new hat or in lieu thereof the sum of two pounds sterling.(55)

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These provisions may have been peculiar to 'parish' apprenticeship indentures but it is the equivalent of the 'freedom suit' which was common in American indentures.

At a higher level, in a pamphlet (56) published in 1855, a member of Parliament, Tristram Kennedy, along with W.K. Sullivan, the Professor of Chemistry to the Museum of Irish Industry, outlined the causes which had led to the backward condition of industrial skill in Ireland, painting a very black picture indeed. They described a visit to Charitable Workshops, Apprenticeship Workshops and Apprenticeship Schools in Belgium. They made the following points concerning the absence of craft skills among the native Irish at the beginning of the 19th. century:

All the skilled industry of the country was thus monopolised by one section of the nation (English and Protestant) and except as tillers of the soil and as affording all the brute labour of the towns the great mass of the people have no share in it.

But the industry of the country was entirely artificial; it was confined to certain districts, from which the original inhabitants had either in part or altogether been driven by famine or persecution.

This monopoly of skilled labour by one section of the population, arose partly from legal enactments for the purpose and partly because all traditional aptitude for skillful art had been obliterated in the great mass of the people, by the isolation and poverty in which constant war had kept them and by the oppression of a dominant party.

The effect of these causes might even have been traced up to a few years back in as much as, until recently, gem

setters, glass blowers, silversmiths, engravers, watchmakers, saddlers, braziers, gunsmiths and many other skilled artisans were almost without exception Protestant, which in Ireland is almost synonymous with being of English origin, as is well known by the class of persons who were eligible to become 'freemen' of our corporate towns.

and the saddest comment of all:

In this point of view, the Irish peasantry may be said to have rather retrograded than advanced from the commencement of this century up to within a few years until indeed the actions of the National Schools began to be felt. With the decay of industry the quality of the peoples' food diminished and was at last reduced to a single article the potato, and their clothes to imported rags. Thus all notion of domestic economy disappeared and that best of all schools, a home, became inoperative because it had ceased to exist. The female portion of the population were ignorant of everything which in other countries constitutes the most essential part of their education; they did not know, in many cases, even how to mend their clothes, and it may be truly said that the simplest elements of cooking were unknown to fully threequarters of the Irish population.

The Member of Parliament and the Professor concluded:

The few comments which we have made will, we hope, set people to think upon this important subject. May they also lead them to act.(57)

This account, of course, was written shortly after the Great Famine and applied to the native Irish population in the towns

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and countryside. Alas for the Golden Age! But people did think and people acted, for, twenty five years later, Professor W.K. Sullivan, then in Queen's College, Cork, submitted a paper to a Royal Commission on Technical Instruction - The Samuelson Commission - entitled Technical Instruction in Ireland. This paper gave the broad outlines of the system of Technical Instruction which developed here later.

There were other developments, too, indicating that concerned and influential people were taking an interest in the education and training of apprentices. George F. Shaw, LL.D. FTCD. read a paper entitled 'On the Use and Abuse of Apprenticeship' to the Dublin Statistical Society on the 18th. March 1861. In his paper he made the following points:

The education of the working classes must inevitably remain in a very low and unsatisfactory condition, until some arrangement be devised for continuing through the years of adolescence, the instruction that has been commenced at school. The first and most important step to be taken towards this end is to reduce the hours of labour for the apprentice within such limits as may secure him a couple of hours, tolerably unfatigued in mind and body, for evening school. Without this it is to no purpose to provide for him popular lectures, public libraries, literacy classes at Mechanics' Institutes and all the other apparatus of instruction of which so much parade is made. The working man keeps away from our institutions because he has no taste for the knowledge they provide and he lacks the taste because he was kept working at his trade as if that was the only work to do.(58)

Even the law was beginning to deal more humanely with apprentices. In the Register of Kilmainham Gaol for 1812, there is a record of the committal to prison for two years of Simon

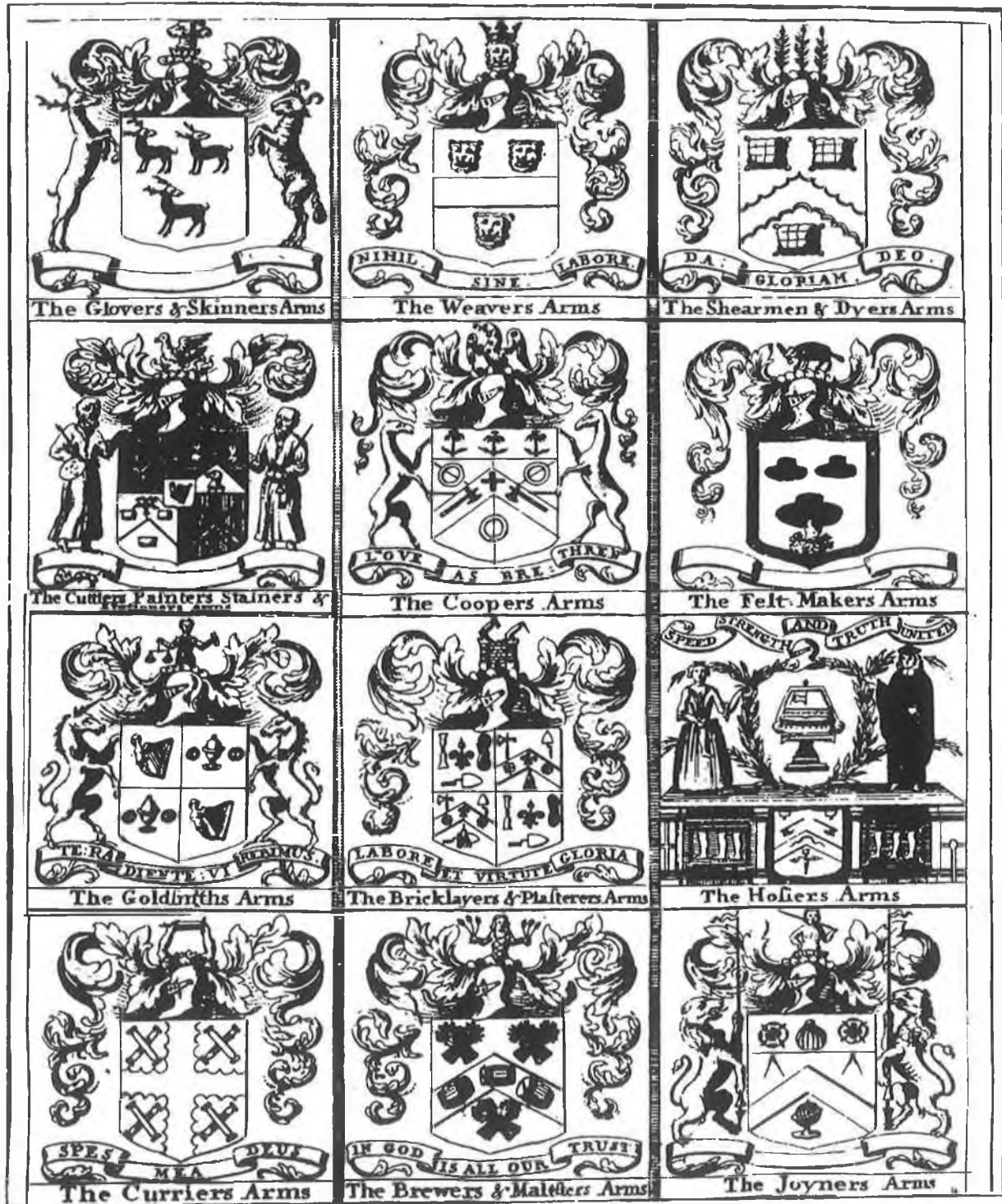
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O'Brien, aged nineteen, for having absconded from his apprenticeship to join the forces.(59) However, according to a report in the Irish Times on the 20th. September 1859, when Captain Knox, proprietor of that paper, summoned a young man, James Phillips, for absconding from his work after having signed a document agreeing to bind himself as an indentured apprentice, the magistrate dismissed the case on the grounds that the defendant had not been regularly indentured having merely signed an agreement promising to bind himself.

Another individual who saw the need for an initiative on industrial training in the mid-nineteenth century was a Mr. Thomas Mooney. He had returned from America where he had noted the absence of skill and organisation among Irish emigrants. In association with the Dublin Board of Irish Manufacture and Industry, established in 1850, he had initiated an Industrial Training Movement to correct this situation. One approach was to encourage the foundation of industrial schools and workshops for local manufactures and to advocate the inclusion of workshops in Poor Houses. The Society for the Promotion of Irish Manufacture, a later offshoot of the Dublin Board, sought to create an enterprise spirit and organise training schools. In all, some 120 were set up, mainly for females in convents, in lace-making, embroidery and weaving. Many failed and others were taken over by the Board of National Education.(60)

But by far the most important developemwnt in technical education and training was the establishment of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction (Samuelson Commission). The Commissioners issued their first Report in 1881 and their final Reports in 1884. As well as devoting one volume of the Report solely to the situation in Ireland, the Commission also made separate recommendations for the Irish situation. It was a new beginning and could be seen as the origin of the modern system of technical education and apprenticeship in Ireland.

FIGURE 3



SOME OF THE ARMS OF IRISH GUILDS

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## Chapter Four

### THE BEGINNINGS OF A SYSTEM OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR IRELAND

#### 1. General Educational Background

##### Introduction:

So far the emphasis has been on the antiquity of apprenticeship, its widespread nature and its continuity over the centuries. The intention was to provide a background for the more detailed treatment of the modern development of apprenticeship in Ireland, which will now be undertaken.

By the third quarter of the 19th. century, the educational system as we know it today at primary, secondary and university level was taking shape. The last quarter saw a series of events which provided the framework for the development of technical education. These were the setting up of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction - the Samuelson Commission - in 1881; the Bill to enable County Councils and Municipal Authorities to provide technical schools and classes in 1889; the Report of the Recess Committee in 1896; the Local Government (Ireland) Bill of 1898 and the Bill for the establishment of a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) in 1899.

##### Primary Education - The National Schools:

The landmark year for primary education in Ireland was 1831, when, for the first time, the State took direct responsibility for its provision. During the earlier decades of the 19th. century the area of elementary education had been the preserve of a variety of groups and individuals, privately funded for the most part and independent of any overall regulation or control. They included Protestant societies, many of them

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engaged in proselytism, and the Kildare Place Society with its multi-denominational approach, Catholic teaching orders, increasingly active after the repeal of the oppressive Penal Laws and a large number of private individuals. In 1824, an official commission calculated that there were about 11,000 schools in Ireland, with an enrolment of approximately 500,000 pupils - two out of every five children of school-going age. (1) The great majority of those schools were replaced by or absorbed into the new system.

Control of the national schools was vested in a State-appointed board of commissioners who set the curriculum, decided on the text-books to be used and allocated the State's proportion of the funding. (The remainder of the funding was to be raised at local level, but this was never done successfully.) The schools were to be non-denominational with a clear distinction between secular and religious education. This policy met with determined opposition from the various churches, with their historically rooted hostility and mutual suspicion and their shared fear of a trend towards secularisation. The outcome was effectively a denominational system.

In spite of the problems at policy level the system grew steadily, from 789 associated schools with 107,042 pupils in 1833, to 5,623 schools with 804,000 pupils, in 1860. There were still over 2,600 unassociated schools in 1871 with over 125,000 pupils. (2) These included the Christian Brothers schools and those of the Church Education Society, a system set up by the Church of Ireland in opposition to the national schools. Attendance was not compulsory and the impressive enrolment figures, which suggest that more than four out of five children of school-going age were attending school, do not reflect the low daily attendance rates and the early drop-out of many pupils. Nevertheless, progress with the scheme was such that

'by 1900 every parish and many townlands could boast of having its national school'.(3)

An underlying aim of the State's educational policy was the strengthening of the political union of Ireland and Great Britain, achieved through the Act of Union of 1800, by a process of anglicisation through the education system. The Irish language and Irish culture had no place in the curriculum. The aim was basic literacy and numeracy and reading, writing and elementary mathematics formed the staples of the school programme. The only significant attempt to include a practical subject in the curriculum was an experiment in agricultural education, in the middle decades of the century, when a number of model agricultural schools were in operation as well as ordinary national schools with farms attached. This experiment was discontinued after 1870, because of the financial costs and disappointment with the results, and also because of opposition from landlords and others to the instruction given and the objections of the Liverpool Financial Reform Association on the grounds of State interference with agriculture.(4)

The first major review of the system was carried out by the Royal Commission of Enquiry into Primary Education - the Powis Commission - in 1868-70. It found much to criticise, from the poor condition of school buildings and the lack of basic facilities to the low standard of education provided by the teachers, only 34% of whom had received formal training. The Commission was concerned by the poor attendance rates and the small numbers of pupils in the higher grades. To remedy the situation they recommended a payment by results scheme under which teachers would be paid fees based on their pupils' results in an examination to be carried out annually by the Board's inspectors. The obligatory subjects were reading writing and spelling, for all grades, with geography and

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grammar added for the higher grades, as well as needlework for the girls and agriculture for boys in rural schools taught by a master. The examination programme also included several optional subjects which were taught mainly outside school hours.(5) A minimum attendance of ninety days (later increased to one hundred days) was required to qualify for the examination and regulations regarding age were introduced to encourage movement from lower to higher grades. These recommendations were put into effect. The results were an improved performance by pupils and an increase in the numbers in the higher grades. But it also encouraged a narrow concentration on the core subjects of the curriculum and learning by rote.

**Practical Education in Primary Schools:**

The absence of practical education in the primary schools drew increasing criticism in the later decades of the 19th. century, not only in Ireland but in the industrial countries of Western Europe and in the United States. Arguments for its introduction were based on industrial and economic considerations as well as on purely educational grounds. In response to calls for curricular reform, the Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction - the Belmore Commission - was set up in 1897. In their reports, the Commission were at pains to stress the educational value of practical and manual instruction while also acknowledging its importance as a preparation for technical education at a later stage. They found that pupils leaving the national schools were unable to benefit from technical education because of the absence of practical education at primary level. As a result of their recommendations, new subjects with a more practical content were introduced and made obligatory - manual instruction, object lessons, elementary science, cooking and laundry,

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drawing, singing and physical education. Courses were provided for student teachers in the training colleges to prepare them for this new departure. It ushered in a new era in the national schools, but difficulties arose, especially in the smaller schools, in relation to courses such as science and cookery which required more elaborate equipment and facilities, and also because of the poor supply of teachers trained in these new subjects. Implementation of the programme was patchy and Manual Instruction was dropped from the curriculum in 1904. In spite of these efforts to give a more practical aspect to primary education, it could still be said at the end of the 19th. century that the school programme was 'divorced from the realities of life and work outside the school'.(6) These realities were the outcome of a backward and stagnant economy, the industrial sector of which had suffered severely in the free trade conditions which followed the Union, while the agricultural sector, following the trauma of the famine, was experiencing the depressing effects of England's cheap food policy and the dislocation caused by the land war. Many campaigners for educational reform saw technical instruction in the primary schools as a pre-requisite for economic progress. This was especially the case as the great majority of pupils did not progress further than primary level.

**Secondary Education:**

While the structure and administration of primary education underwent important changes in the 19th. century, no such comparable development took place in the area of secondary education. It remained the preserve of a privileged minority and was dispensed mainly in privately owned denominational schools under the control of the local clergy and in a variety of schools conducted by private individuals. Apart from a number of Church of Ireland schools which were supported by

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endowments, funding came from fees and from private benefactions. The State was not perceived as having a role in the provision of 'intermediate' education.

In the absence of any body to set and oversee standards the quality of the education given varied considerably, as did the accommodation and facilities provided. However, in all schools the curriculum conformed to the same pattern - that of the classical grammar school with the emphasis on the humanities. That this was the proper sphere of secondary education remained unquestioned within the system. But this assumption was challenged from without. A series of inquiries into endowed schools criticised, among other things, the absence from the curriculum of practical subjects related to the economic needs of the community. One of these was chaired by Thomas Wyse, a leading figure in the campaign for educational reform, who stressed the need for a training in science, and advised that all schools should include 'the exercises of industry' as part of their Physical Education programme.(7) The Committee chaired by Thomas Wyse, which reported in 1838, recommended the extension to secondary education of some of the guiding principles of the national system: mixed education; local funding; a wide and balanced curriculum; proper training and remuneration of teachers and monitoring by means of inspection. Reforms along these lines were also proposed by the Royal Commission on Endowed Schools (the Kildare Commission) of 1858. But the prevailing laissez-faire ideology and the opposition of the ecclesiastical authorities to mixed education prevented progress along these lines.

The main event of importance in secondary education was the passing of the Intermediate Education Act, 1878, which enabled State funds to be channelled to all secondary schools, and thus indirectly instituted State support for denominational education. Payments were made to the schools on the basis of

pupils' success in public examinations conducted by an examination board. This influx of State funds into the system resulted in an increase in the numbers of pupils in secondary schools from about 22,000 in 1871 to about 35,000 by 1901.(8) However, the Act did not result in any reform of the system. The functions of the new board were limited to the examinations which in fact strengthened the narrow grammar school bias of the curriculum by giving subjects such as the classics and English a higher marks weighting and higher results fees than modern languages or the sciences. The system generated an intensely competitive atmosphere and a resulting concentration on the more highly-rated subjects, with widespread cramming. A further source of pressure was the effect of the limited funds available for results fees on the success rates of the candidates.

In 1898, the Intermediate Education Board drew attention to 'many defects' in the system, and a commission, the Palles Commission, was set up, consisting of members of the Board, to examine its workings. This Commission reported in August, 1899. An attempt was made to reduce the pressures of the examination system by replacing the results fees by a system of capitation fees and by ending the publication of results. When the result of this was a dramatic rise in the failure rate the old results fees system was largely revived. To correct the imbalance of the curriculum, a choice of courses including a science course was introduced and the marks rating system was ended. But few schools were in a position to provide this variety of courses, and it was only when science and drawing were placed under the umbrella of the new Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, in 1900, that these subjects made significant progress. Attempts to introduce more fundamental reforms of the system foundered on the resistance of the school authorities to any encroachment by the State in the area of secondary education.

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**Universities:**

In the area of university education the familiar controversies regarding control and denominational status again generated conflict and progress was difficult and slow. The University of Dublin, founded in 1591 with one constituent college, Trinity College, remained Ireland's only university until the middle of the 19th. century. Its strong Church of Ireland ethos and tradition made it unacceptable to Catholics, and though the religious tests which had, in effect, excluded other denominations were finally abolished in 1874, the Catholic hierarchy imposed a ban on attendance at the College the following year. The bishops and their spokesmen in Parliament, who included Daniel O'Connell and the O'Connor Don, had for long been pressing for a Catholic university under clerical control. The Government was not prepared to concede this demand, but was prepared to take an initiative in widening access to university education. The result was the Irish Colleges Act of 1845 which set up the non-denominational Queen's Colleges in Galway, Cork and Belfast, fully state-financed and under state control. In 1850, the Queen's University was established as an examining and degree awarding body. Though there were divided views on the matter, the Colleges were denounced by the hierarchy at their Synod in Thurles the same year, and Catholics were strongly advised against attending them. As a result of this opposition the Cork and Galway colleges languished though the Belfast college, with its largely Presbyterian student body, made better progress.

In opposition to the Queen's Colleges, the Catholic hierarchy set up the Catholic University in Dublin, formally opened in 1854, with John Henry Newman as rector. It was refused state recognition and ensuing problems of finance as well as low student numbers and disagreements between Newman and some of the bishops hindered progress. The position was somewhat

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improved in 1879 when the Government set up the Royal University as an examining body. Students of the Catholic University, as well as all others, could enter for its degrees, and a scheme of scholarships was introduced through which the University benefited for the first time from state funds. Some few years later, the Royal University took over the functions of the Queen's University which was abolished. The problems of the Catholic University persisted and, in 1882, the bishops incorporated it, with a number of other institutions, into a new entity called University College Dublin.

At the turn of the century the problem of university education remained unresolved though various options were being canvassed actively. The solution was provided through the Irish Universities' Act of 1908. A new federal university, the National University of Ireland, was set up with the old Queen's Colleges in Cork and Galway - renamed University College Cork and University College Galway - and University College Dublin as constituent colleges. Maynooth became a 'recognised' college of the University in 1910. Under a later Act, the Royal College of Science, which had evolved from the earlier Museum of Irish Industry, and whose first dean was Sir Robert Kane, was transferred to University College Dublin. Queen's College Belfast became a full university in its own right. The position of Trinity College remained unaltered.

During the 19th. century, the long held concept of university education as a purely intellectual training, founded mainly on classical studies, had come under attack. The growth of industrialisation, accompanied by new advances in science and technology was seen to require a different orientation and response from the institutes of higher education. In Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, the issue was keenly debated as measures were taken to found new university institutions. Trinity College, by and large, retained the emphasis on

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traditional learning at which it excelled. The new Queen's Colleges were in the more modern utilitarian mode, a decision welcomed by those, like Sir Robert Kane and Thomas Wyse, who were greatly concerned by Ireland's industrial and commercial backwardness. The effectiveness of the universities as stimulators of economic advance was, however, almost non-existent. Part of the problem lay at the level of intermediate education which was not providing students of the required calibre for third level colleges. Lack of funds and facilities for research was another problem. There was no endowment of university chairs or funding of research by industry or commerce:

Thus the universities' links with the economic, industrial and commercial life of Ireland were mainly indirect, through training of graduates in appropriate disciplines.(9)

In the late 19th. century even this link was a slender one as industries of sufficient scale to recruit graduate staff were very few in number, and appreciation of the nature and value of university education was not widespread.

The most trenchant critic of Irish education in the 19th. century, from a utilitarian point of view, was Sir Horace Plunkett. Referring to the reports of the Belmore and Palles Commissions and the Royal Commission on University Education (1903), he pointed out that all of them showed that the education available at all three levels 'had little regard to the industrial or economic conditions of the country'.(10) The system was calculated:

to turn our youth into a generation of second rate clerks, with a distinct distaste for any industrial or productive occupation in which qualities such as

initiative, self reliance or judgment were called for.(11)

He was particularly critical of the universities, condemning Trinity for 'its academic isolation and aloofness from the great national problems that were being worked out'.(12) With reference to educational, economic and social problems, he deplored that so little has been contributed to their solution by those 'who ought to have been leaders of thought'.(13) He stated his conviction that the problems of Irish education like all other Irish problems:

must be considered from the standpoint of its relation to the practical affairs and everyday life of the people of Ireland.(14)

There should be direct contact between those in the industries of the country and those engaged in framing the educational system to ensure this was so and he concluded:

Education in Ireland has for too long been a thing apart from the economic realities of the country - with what result we know.(15)

### **Technical Education:**

With regard to technical education, by the middle of the 19th. century there was a growing public opinion that, if Ireland was to make economic progress both industrially and agriculturally, a technically trained and orientated workforce was needed. In addition, the development of manual skills at primary school level came to be recognised and accepted as a worthwhile addition to the educative process for young people. The National Board in its Fourth Annual Report in 1837, as already

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quoted, had set out the case for agricultural and industrial education pointing out that the object was not to teach trades but to explain underlying principles and encourage the acquisition of manual skills.(16) A Model Farm, later to become the Albert Agricultural College, was opened by the National Board, in Glasnevin in 1838, to train national teachers and pupils in agriculture. By 1858, thirty-six model agricultural schools were in operation and agriculture was being taught as a practical subject in about sixty national schools. But following a Treasury committee report in 1874 the model schools were sold off, all except two, the Albert College and the Munster Institute in Cork.

#### **The Royal Dublin Society and other Technical Institutes:**

Outside the formal education system, technical education was being provided by a variety of institutes and societies. The most prestigious of these was the Royal Dublin Society, founded in 1731 to raise standards across the whole spectrum of economic and cultural activity. Its programme of lectures and exhibitions spanned the arts, sciences, industry and agriculture. It published instructional pamphlets on a wide range of topics, and, in order to improve quality, awarded prizes in the areas of handicrafts, home produce and crop and animal husbandry. In 1863, there was a proposal by a select committee that the Museum of Irish Industry (founded in 1854) should be taken over by the Royal Dublin Society. The proposal generated such strong opposition that another select committee, in 1864, recommended that it should remain autonomous as the Royal College of Science with responsibility for providing a course in science applicable to the industrial arts such as mining, agriculture, engineering and manufactures and also to train teachers of science. This College offered a three year diploma course as well as part-time courses and lectures.

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However, it appears that the full-time students there, whose numbers averaged between twenty and thirty, were mainly either English or Scottish. With regard to technical education generally, the Metropolitan School of Art which had been established by the Dublin Society (later the Royal Dublin Society) in 1749, and which at one stage was located in Leinster House, provided instruction in drawing, painting, modelling and design for manufacturers.(17) Mechanics Institutes continued to operate in some locations but in the second half of the century were concerned more with literary and cultural affairs. Following the Artisans' Exhibition held in Dublin in 1885, a technical school for science and art was set up in Kevin Street to provide training for the artisan class to enable them to hold their own with foreign competitors. This school was managed by a local committee and supported by grants from the Corporation of Dublin, the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, and the City and Guilds of London Institute.(18) At Ringsend, a Fishery School had been established under the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke. Belfast had a School of Art, a weaving school and some classes for workmen, while in Cork there was a School of Art (later the Crawford College of Art) (19) and a Christian Brothers' school which also had a technical laboratory where some technical instruction was given. Cork also had the Munster Dairy School, later to become the Munster Institute, which provided training in the agriculture area.

#### **Industrial and Reformatory Schools:**

The Industrial Schools, established in 1869 which provided for children who were destitute or who lacked proper guardianship or were orphans, and the Reformatory Schools, set up in 1858, which catered for children in difficulties with the law, both gave good training in trades and handicrafts to boys and girls.

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In a reference to practical education in Ireland, the Recess Committee in its Report summarised the position as follows:

With the exception of the schools for the children of the criminal and the improvident classes, which answer their purpose sufficiently well, the Munster Dairy School and the three Art Schools, the system of practical education here outlined, may be broadly said to have no real life.(20)

### **Apprenticeship:**

As far as apprenticeship was concerned, there was no statutory control. Apprentices were still, in some cases, being bound to employers under common law indentures. Arthur Young in his A Tour in Ireland refers to a linen mill in Blarney, in 1765, erected by Messrs Forest and Donoghue, which provided employment for twenty-five weaver families each of which had three apprentices. At the 1799 Census, for example, one hundred and eleven apprentices had been recorded in Carrick-on-Suir. The emerging craft unions were beginning to exercise some of the control of the old craft guilds, particularly in relation to intake and apprentice numbers and some unions had instituted their own indenture system. Apprentices whose masters were members of Mechanics' Institutes were allowed to attend lectures provided by the Institutes without payment. There is also evidence that in Belfast, Dublin and Cork some apprentices were being encouraged by their masters to attend classes, mainly in drawing, in the Schools of Art in these cities.(21) At a later date, Mr.T.P.Gill, who had been a Member of Parliament and secretary to the Recess Committee, and later, the first secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, in comparing the existing state of apprenticeship to what it had been under the old guild system, used the phrase 'only a sort of wreckage remains'.

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## 2. The Samuelson Commission

### Introduction:

The initiative which set in motion an impetus for a system of technical education for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was a letter dated 15th. May, 1867, from Dr. Lyon Playfair, formerly secretary of the science division of the Science and Art Department, to the Chairman of the Schools' Inquiry Commission. Dr. Playfair, who had been a juror at the Paris Exhibition of 1867, demanded in his letter:

an inquiry which should tell the people of England authoritatively what are the means by which the great states are attaining an intellectual pre-eminence among industrial classes and how they are making this to bear on the progress of their national industries.(22)

Two years later, in 1869, Sir John Scott Russell published a provocative booklet on the subject entitled Systematic Technical Education for the English People. The Government's response to these two challenges was to appoint two select committees and a royal commission. The latter, the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction set up in 1881 by order of Queen Victoria, under the chairmanship of Bernhard Samuelson M.P., was the most important from Ireland's point of view. This Commission, known as the Samuelson Commission, had its terms of reference set out as follows:

Whereas We have deemed it expedient that a Commission should forthwith issue to inquire into the Instruction of the Working Classes of certain Foreign Countries in technical and other subjects for the purpose of comparison with that of the corresponding classes in this Country and



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into the influence of such Instruction on manufacturing and other Industries at home and abroad.(23)

The Commission published two Reports; the first, in 1882, was a short interim one while the second, published in 1884, was a massive report of five volumes. Volume 1 was the General Report with an appendix covering domestic trades in South Germany and Austria. Volume 2 dealt with agricultural education in North Germany, France, Denmark, Belgium, Holland and the United Kingdom, and technical education in the United States and Canada. Volume 3 covered technical education in Russia, a report on the silk industry, evidence relating to England and, more importantly for Ireland, a complete section on a Scheme of Technical Education for Ireland submitted by Professor W. K. Sullivan of the Royal College in Cork. Volume 4 was devoted entirely to evidence relating to Ireland, and Volume 5 consisted of foreign reports and appendices, including programmes and reports on technical schools in Europe, America and in Great Britain.

#### **The First Samuelson Report:**

The First Report, presented in February 1882, less than six months after the Commission was set up, dealt specifically with developments in France, which the Commission had noted and felt should be brought to the attention of the Government without delay. These developments related particularly to the introduction of manual instruction to pupils of elementary schools, and a move towards compulsory elementary education for all. A considerable portion of the Report, and four of its appendices, were devoted to descriptions and an analysis of apprenticeship schools, both private and municipal, which had been recently set up in France for the training of artisans. Two private apprenticeship schools were described, one in a

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large printing works and another under the control of the Christian Brothers at the Rue de Vaugirard in Paris which had, in addition to 720 ordinary pupils, 250 apprentices all of whom were boarders. Apprentices entered the school at fourteen years of age and paid an entrance fee and an annual fee to cover maintenance and instruction. Apprenticeship contracts with selected masters existed and the apprentices worked for their masters in the school workshops during their training. They received no pay during their apprenticeships which lasted for three or four years depending on the trade. At the end of their training they could remain on in the school for a further year as journeymen, working in the workshops for their employer who paid for their board. The following trades were taught: book binding; type-setting; printing; instrument making; bronze and brass work; gilding; joinery; saddlery; woodcarving and engraving; map-engraving and engine fitting. Two hours instruction in general school subjects was provided by the Christian Brothers. The Report concludes that 'the apprentices appear to be well taught and secure ready employment'.(24)

Some French municipal authorities had established public apprenticeship schools and the Commission visited one, the School of the Boulevard de la Villette in Paris which had opened in 1872 and which had 250 apprentices in training in wood and iron work. Boys were admitted after they had left primary school with a Certificate of Primary Studies. The instruction was free and was divided into general and technical subjects. All students followed the same first year preparatory course, consisting mainly of a system of rotation through the various workshops, and specialised in a particular trade for the second, third and fourth years. The school operated from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, with two hours for meals. In the preparatory year, six hours daily were spent in the workshops and four hours at general school subjects, this being changed to eight hours and two hours, respectively, in the subsequent

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years. A feature of the workshops training was that a drawing or a sketch to scale had to be made before any practical work commenced. The curriculum also included three hours in the gymnasium each week. The Commission reported that a number of similiar schools were proposed for the Paris area and that there was a similiar school at Harve, and one for girls at Rouen, operating on the same lines. The Commission also mentioned a number of government apprenticeship schools, one for watch-making and one for porcelain decoration, and a number of guild apprenticeship schools. These latter conducted evening classes, generally providing instruction in drawing.

Two appendices to the Report consisted of reports of two French commissions on apprenticeship schools. The first, by M. Corbon, was on the Municipal Apprenticeship School of the Boulevard de la Villette and the second, by M. Tolains, dealt with the establishment of apprenticeship schools. Both of these commissions were very supportive of the concept of full-time training for apprentices in schools as a method of training artisans. However, the appendices also included two letters from French employers who had been asked by the Samuelson Commission for their views on these schools. Neither reply was enthusiastic about apprentices trained in them, stating that they were by no means efficient workmen and that the skills were better acquired within the works and commented:

we find the boys brought up to the trade in our own works or others, age for age, far superior workmen than the boys trained at la Villette. (25)

The First Report of the Samuelson Commission came out in favour of the introduction of instruction in the use of tools in the elementary schools stating that such instruction:

besides being of service to every child whether destined to become a mechanic or not, will tend in the former case to facilitate the learning of a trade though it may not shorten the necessary period of apprenticeship.(26)

The Commission also advised that elementary education needed to be made more efficient and extended to the whole of the working population so as to place within its reach increased opportunities for technical education, on the grounds that a proper elementary education was the only sound foundation for any subsequent technical training. As regards apprenticeship schools the Commission summarised its conclusions as follows:

We have great difficulty in estimating the necessity for and the value of apprenticeship schools as a mode of training artisans. In spite of the partial cessation of apprenticeship, what can be and is learnt in the workshops can be underestimated. We are not sufficiently convinced of the advantages of apprenticeship schools for training ordinary workmen, like those of la Villette and Harve, as compared with the great cost of their establishment and maintenance, to warrant us recommending their introduction into this country, until they have had a more prolonged trial abroad. (27)

It would appear that the Commission may have been more influenced in their thinking by the letters they had received from the two employers that by the reports of M. Corbon and M. Tolains.

#### **Second Samuelson Report:**

Having submitted its first report in February 1882, the Commission, in the course of its continued investigations, held

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public sessions of its inquiry in Dublin, Belfast and Cork and visited a number of institutions involved in technical training in Ireland. In addition, it circularised trade organisations, trade unions, firms and individuals, seeking information and comments on the question of technical education. Some of the evidence given at the public sessions in Ireland, a number of Irish replies to the circular letter and, in particular, a paper submitted by Professor W. K. Sullivan of Queen's College, Cork on a Scheme for Technical Education for Ireland, which was published in Volume 3. of the Commission's Report are worthy of special comment. Of particular interest are the Commission's views on the Industrial and Reformatory Schools which they visited while in Ireland.

Concerning the state of apprenticeship in Ireland at the time, Mr. Charles Mathers of the Bakers Association, when asked at the inquiry in Dublin on 4th. June, 1883: 'Is your association a teaching body at all from the apprentice's point of view? Is it a sort of guild?' replied: 'It teaches nothing; the apprentices are bound and serve their time'. When further questioned if the apprenticeship was just a mechanical training, the reply was that the apprentice must be a competent baker at the end of five years. Mr. James Perry, the County Surveyor of Galway, who had himself served an apprenticeship, suggested the establishment of technical schools in towns to teach apprentices, that attendance at these schools should form part of the apprentice's indenture and his master should give him time to attend. He also advocated a return to the indenture system and the issue of certificates from the technical schools which would be recognised by tradesmen, although he anticipated that there would be a reaction from trade unions and jealousy from tradesmen who would not have had technical training. A cabinet-maker in Dublin, Mr. Thomas Scott, favoured technical schools attached to the elementary schools where a boy

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intending to pursue a trade would have the opportunity of learning the early stages of the work of his trade and said:

The boy when he comes into the workshops is of no use for twelve months. He is looking on. But if he were taught to a certain extent the preliminaries of his trade in the schools he would go into the workshops at once and commence actual work; when boys are now in the shop, twelve or eighteen months of the five years they serve doing practically nothing; and after that they serve five or six years and even then they will not become tradesmen. They can do a job but they have to work three or four years longer before they get full wages.(28)

He also felt that if the use of tools was taught in the elementary schools the period of apprenticeship could be shortened. Although he encouraged his own apprentices to attend drawing classes in the Royal Dublin Society School of Art, and was prepared to give them an hour off, he could not induce them to attend. He advocated strongly the return of the signed indenture system and considered that the absence of a binding contract was a 'great evil' for masters and tradesmen alike, and was responsible for many of the problems associated with apprenticeship and the training of tradesmen. When it was put to Mr. Scott that the apprenticeship system had practically broken down in England and Ireland his reply was: 'It has been broken down'.

Another witness at the inquiry in Dublin was Michael Davitt, founder of the Land League, who had been released from prison the previous day. He spoke in favour of the establishment in the cities and towns in Ireland of apprenticeship schools similar to that in operation in the Boulevard de la Villette in Paris. He considered that technical instruction should form part of the curriculum of national schools, 'allowing if

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necessary an hour before or an hour after ordinary school hours for instruction in the use of tools'. In relation to the Reformatory Schools he had this to say;

It is as singular as it is regrettable that boys must commit some offence against society before society will trouble itself with providing for them an industrial training. If the trades that are taught to boys in reformatory schools and to youths in prison (as for example in the Richmond Prison, Dublin) were part of primary education there would be fewer criminals.(29)

He was also in favour of an extension of the Mechanics Institutes with the Treasury lending a helping hand. In reference to his own education he said: 'What little instruction I received from my father, I supplemented by attendance at the Mechanics Institute in the evening'.

At the session of the inquiry held in Cork, a Town Councillor and builder, named Commendatore Delaney, stated in evidence that had he had the opportunity of going to technical school from the age of twelve years and seeing the application to his trade of the different classes of machinery, it would in fact have been of the greatest advantage to him. In relation to the principles of construction, he did not learn these until he was out of his time. He also stated that classes in machine drawing and building construction existed in Cork at the Christian Brothers Schools and at the School of Art, and that 'these were of a very valuable character to apprentices'. He would make it compulsory on employers to send their apprentices to a technical school and, in his own case, such attendance would have enabled him to shorten the period of his apprenticeship. The Rev. John Hayde, manager of the Upton Reformatory School, in evidence, gave details of the number of boys undergoing trade training in the school at the end of 1882 as follows: 18

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cabinet-makers, 30 tailors, 10 carpenters, 31 shoemakers, 2 bakers, 5 bookbinders, 9 each painters, blacksmiths, plumbers and 3 masons. Evidently the school had a number of outlets in Cork city for items produced by the apprentices but 'there is so much jealousy on the part of the trade unions that it is not easy to dispose of the work'. As regards technical training, the Rev. Hayde stated that there must be evening classes for apprentices and for those who cannot attend during the day.(30)

Among the written submissions was a letter from the Rev. R. Maxwell, Superior General of the Order of Christian Brothers, in the course of which he states:

and here may I be permitted to observe that, in the case of markets for the disposing of the manufactured wares (of day industrial schools), a grave question suggests itself to my mind whether or not the sale of these goods may excite the keen susceptibilities of the artisan class, who may regard an extensive system of day industrial schools as an infringement on their own prescriptive rights, and an interference with their legitimate means of livelihood: this consideration it seems to me ought not to be overlooked.

A reply in response to the Commission's circular letter from Pim Brothers, Silk Manufacturers, of Dublin put the point more forcibly as the following extract shows:

Technical training in the mounting of looms and in actual weaving would be an advantage but the trade of silk weavers here would, we fear, consider this an attempt to break down or set aside their apprenticeship system and would, therefore, oppose it and do all they could to prevent young men from taking advantage of such instruction. (31)



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On the other hand, John. S. Brown of the linen trade in Belfast had other reservations:

I do not think that the linen trade of the north of Ireland would be benefited by technical schools as this trade here has been brought to such perfection that it holds first place in the world for the production of linen fabrics..... Again, if these schools were open to all comers, they would be injurious to the linen trade as it is probable that many students would come from the Continent to learn our mode of manufacture.(32)

**Submission of Professor W. K. Sullivan:**

By far the most important and farseeing submission made to the Commission was that of Professor W. K. Sullivan, then President of Queen's College, Cork, entitled Scheme for Technical Education for Ireland. Dr. Sullivan was a noted advocate of technical education since the 1850's when he was Professor at the Museum of Irish Industry. His paper, which had been solicited by the Commission, could be regarded as a master plan for technical education for Ireland. It was published in full as an appendix to the Second Report of the Commission and quite obviously influenced some of its recommendations. Dr. Sullivan's outline envisaged an integrated scheme involving the teaching of art, science, agriculture and trades geared to the needs of the people and the special circumstances of the locality. It included the training of teachers, the provision of small museums and model rooms, the setting up of polytechnics, the opening of Queen's Colleges to artisans through night classes, a combination of State and local funding with local management, subject to Government inspection and audit, as well as provision for the training of the destitute poor. He summarises his paper as follows:

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I will conclude with the following expression of opinion as to the principles that should govern every scheme of technical education: All institutions save reclamation and afforesting, should spring from the wants and wishes of the locality, which should bear part of the burden of maintaining them but that in the exceptional case of Ireland the State should liberally help. That management should be in the hands of local authorities subject to careful and competent Government inspection and rigid audit of expenditure.(33)

Specifically in relation to trades, Dr.Sullivan saw technical instruction being undertaken: solely in schools; in schools with 'illustrations' in the workshops; or totally in the workshops, and ranging from the entirely theoretical to the entirely practical. He maintained that simple outline drawing of common objects was as important to the artisan as writing and that local collections of diagrams, instruments and raw materials are 'the most essential parts of any real system of technical education, more important in Ireland than elsewhere'. He recommended that there should be evening classes for artisans in the Queen's Colleges in Cork and Belfast and in the Royal College of Science in Dublin, which he considered one of the most complete Polytechnic Schools in Europe. However, he foresaw problems in the teaching of handicrafts in schools in case it should 'contravene the maxims of political economy'. He suggested experimental workshops attached to schools of art to bring the designer and the workman into contact, and also advocated that prizes should be awarded to workers for outstanding work. Based on what he had seen earlier in Belgium, and in order to introduce new trades or improve existing trades in a locality, he was in favour in exceptional cases, and only as a temporary measure, of the establishment of apprenticeship workshops to attempt the experiment of introducing new trades to a locality by educating the workers in them. At the inquiry

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in Cork, when he was questioned by members of the Commission on this point, he stated that having studied the situation in Belgium when they were set up, and knowing the situation in Ireland at the time, he considered them 'models of what we should aim at in teaching what I call handicrafts to the people'. He gave as an example the Claddagh Piscatory School in Galway where, under the National Board in the period 1847 to 1853, boys were taught the manufacture of lines, the weaving of nets and other fishery gear as well as some theoretical navigation. This school, he said, had not survived the Famine.

**Samuelson Commission and Industrial and Reformatory Schools:**

During the course of its investigations in Ireland, the Commission visited a number of industrial schools for boys and girls, conducted by orders of nuns and by Christian Brothers. These were considered to be remarkably successful in training young persons for a wide range of handicrafts and in all aspects of farming and gardening. Those trained in these schools, which in 1883 had over 7,200 pupils, got ready employment in their trades. The views of the Commission are best illustrated by the following extract from their Report:

But in the main it may be assumed that the practical perfection of industrial training is assured alone to those who have been rescued by the police and who have become children of the State. The problem is thus how best to devise means by which other classes of the community can secure like advantages for their children.(34)

The Samuelson Commission submitted its Second Report and its Recommendations in April, 1884. These recommendations applied to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. They covered 'the general and technical instruction of the various

classes engaged in industrial pursuits' (35) as it applied to them at all levels of education: elementary schools; classes under the Science and Art Department; training colleges for teachers; secondary and technical instruction; public libraries and museums. There was a section called Special Recommendations for Ireland, and, finally, some general recommendations which 'were by way of suggestions but which did not require special legislative action'. Among the recommendations which could be regarded as having direct application to instruction for trades and for artisans were:

that drawing form part of the elementary school curriculum

that proficiency in the use of tools for working in wood and iron work be a subject in these schools, arrangements being made for instruction to be done outside normal hours

that grants be made for school and provincial museums and that public libraries and museums be opened on Sundays

that school boards under the Science and Art Department, and where these did not exist, local authorities provide classes for young persons and artisans

that fees should not be demanded from artisans for instruction in science and art classes

that more efficient provision should be made for the training of elementary teachers in science and art

that local authorities be empowered to establish and maintain secondary and technical (including agricultural) schools and colleges

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that in certain schools the study of science, drawing, mathematics and modern languages should replace Latin and Greek.

The special recommendations in relation to Ireland were very appropriate to Irish requirements at the time. They included:

the gradual introduction of compulsory attendance at elementary schools

payment for the teaching of home industries to children, young persons and adults

the training of primary school teachers to qualify them to teach the use of tools

the provision by the National Board of text-books to assist primary teachers to teach rudimentary science

grants-in-aid to agricultural schools and schools for instruction in local industries

the Royal College of Science to provide evening classes for artisans

that adequate means for the teaching of practical science be provided in Intermediate schools.

Among the General Recommendations made 'by way of suggestions for the consideration of those in whose power it is to comply with them' were:

that it be made a condition by employers of young people and by trade organisations, in industries requiring a knowledge of science or art, that such young persons

requiring it receive instruction therein either in schools attached to the works or groups of works or in such classes as are available, the employers and the trade organisations contributing to the maintenance of such classes

that teachers should be encouraged through additional payments to retain pupils for advanced instruction in subjects passed at elementary level

that scholarships should be funded to enable pupils to proceed to higher schools and colleges

that the City and Guilds of London Institute receive adequate funds.

**Outcome of the Samuelson Commission:**

The Technical Instruction Act of 1889 resulted from the recommendations of the Samuelson Commission, and Ireland, being part of the United Kingdom, was included in the provisions of this Act. Under it local authorities were empowered to raise a rate of one penny in the pound to provide schemes for technical or manual instruction, and to appoint committees to which all powers under the Act could be delegated (except those of raising a rate or borrowing money). As far as Ireland was concerned, the Act had two major flaws. In the first place, whereas the Local Government (England and Wales) Act of 1888 provided an administrative structure to raise a rate and to provide a local administration system for technical education, this Act did not apply to Ireland. Apart from those cities and towns which had Corporations, the local authorities in Ireland at the time consisted of the urban and rural sanitary authorities controlled by Boards of Guardians which, generally,

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had neither the capacity (in terms of the amount of finance that could be raised through the penny rate), the expertise nor the administrative structures to operate the provisions of the 1889 Act. This Act was, however, amended by the Technical Instruction Act of 1891 which enabled a local authority to aid technical and manual instruction in schools and institutions outside its own district and to award scholarships tenable by its students in institutions not available in its own area. As a result of these two Acts, the Corporation of Dublin, in 1891, took control of technical schools, such as that at Kevin St. but retained the existing management committees. The Corporation of Cork acted similiarly in 1893. The Athenaeum Society in Limerick handed over its premises in trust to the Corporation for the purpose of technical instruction in 1896. In 1897, the Fishery School, which had been presented to Ringsend by the Earl of Pembroke, was handed over to the Pembroke Sanitary Authority, then in Co. Dublin.(36)

The second major flaw in the Act, as far as Ireland was concerned, was that control of technical instruction was handed over to the Science and Art Department. It had long been argued in Ireland that what was needed was decentralisation and local control which would be in touch with the particular needs and requirements of the locality and that the Science and Art Department, in South Kensington, was too remote and out of touch with Irish conditions to be effective. Kieran Byrne, in his essay, Approaches to Technical Education in Nineteenth Century Ireland, summarised the position as follows:

The nature and structure of the Irish industrial framework was uniquely diverse in that few national industries existed and the country's industrial prosperity, such as it was, derived its sustenance from small local industries. In that instance, a technical instruction policy that failed to acknowledge the principle of

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decentralisation of its administrative structures went little way towards meeting Irish requirements.(37)

There was also a problem in relation to the funding of technical education and the distribution of what has been referred to as the 'beer money'. Under the Local Taxation (Custom and Exise) Act, 1890, the residue of the beer and spirit duty was given to county and borough councils in England either for the relief of rates or for the provision of technical education. Ireland's share of this money did not go to local authorities but was applied instead to primary and secondary education. In 1882, the Science and Art Department decided to make grants-in-aid to Irish schools for technical instruction, the grants being equal in amount to the sum contributed from the rates. However, as the amounts contributed by the few local authorities in existence at the time were very low, the grants were correspondingly low. For example, in Ireland in 1894, £5,000 was contributed by the local rates and £2,500 was received in grants for technical education. In England, however, the local rates contributed £25,000 while the 'beer money' contribution was £620,000.(38)

In 1913, when the Dominion of Canada Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, in the course of its investigations visited Ireland, it recorded 'conversations' with Mr. George Fletcher, then assistant secretary in charge of technical education at the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. One of the comments made by him was:

The Local Government Act did not pass till 1898, so that from 1891 to 1901 practically, there were ten dead years in Ireland as related to technical instruction.(39)

While one can understand the point being made by Mr. Fletcher, the last ten years of the century were, in fact, very much



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alive as far as technical education in Ireland was concerned. In 1893, the Technical Education Association for Ireland was founded with both Archbishops of Dublin and Sir Horace Plunkett attending its first meeting (40) and, in 1895, this Association promoted a Private Member's Bill in Parliament to make better provision for technical education in Ireland (41) but it was withdrawn. In 1895, also, the Government received a memorial from 95 of the leading Irish Corporations, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Guardians 'praying that they make better provision for technical education in Ireland'.(42) The Recess Committee, set up in 1895, published its Report in 1896. The question was debated publicly in technical journals such as the Irish Builder and problems were identified and policies clarified. Finally, in 1898, the Local Government (Ireland) Bill became law, establishing the local authority system based on county councils, and in 1899, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was set up as a direct result of the Report of the Recess Committee. By the end of the decade, an Irish solution to the problem of a technical education system for Ireland had been formulated, mainly by Irishmen of whom Sir Horace Plunkett was the leading figure.

### **3. The Recess Committee**

#### **Origins:**

Through the efforts of Sir Horace Plunkett, M.P. for Meath, and his friends, the concept of agricultural co-operatives gained acceptance and was spreading rapidly throughout Ireland in the early 1890s. The next step was seen as the development of a

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system of state aid to Irish agriculture which would have regard to the special problems that existed in that industry, and which would not be controlled from England. Instead of 'agitating for this in the conventional way' through the normal parliamentary process, it was decided to bring together a group of the most competent Irishmen to study the question and to present a case to Parliament. To achieve this the Recess Committee was set up. In August 1895, Plunkett wrote a letter to the Irish papers entitled 'A proposal affecting the general welfare of Ireland', appealing to both sides of the political divide at the time to come together to promote the welfare of the country. The proposal was that a committee should be formed of Irish Members of Parliament, who would be nominated by the leaders of the political sections and who could co-opt any Irishman 'whose capacity, knowledge and experience might be of service to the committee, irrespective of the political party or religious persuasion to which they might belong'. The idea caught on, public bodies throughout the country endorsed the scheme and the parliamentarians who formed the core of the committee co-opted a variety of prominent men so that 'the committee though informal and self appointed was representative in every material respect' and included men of the most opposed political views. Thus was born the Recess Committee, so called because it was to meet during the parliamentary recess. Horace Plunkett became chairman and Mr.T.P.Gill, a member, acted as honorary secretary. It was a powerful instrument for progress as things turned out.

#### **Work of the Recess Committee:**

The Committee initiated an inquiry into the means by which the Government could best develop Ireland's agricultural and industrial resources. Commissioners were sent to the countries of Europe whose conditions and progress might hold some lessons

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for Ireland. Funds and time did not permit visits to the United States and Canada but conditions in countries which were Ireland's chief market competitors were examined. With the co-operative ideal very much to the fore, Commissioners were instructed to collect the facts necessary 'to enable the Committee to differentiate between the parts played respectively by the State and the efforts of the people themselves in providing these results'. In its Report the Committee described Ireland as having 'a diminishing population without industrial habits or technical skill' and 'a population devoid of industrial spirit'. The general position in relation to industry in Ireland was summarised as follows:

The removal in 1800 of the bounties and protective duties by which the Irish Parliament (Grattan's) sought to revive industries between the years 1782 and 1798 - exposing these infant industries to the competition of the great capital and long established skill and ability of England - and the civil war of 1798 completed our industrial ruin.(43)

#### **Recess Committee and Education:**

In relation to education, the Committee considered that the full development of the industrial spirit of the Irish people and of the resources of Ireland, both in agriculture and in manufacturing industry, could not be achieved until the system of education at elementary, secondary and higher levels was radically changed. As regards the higher levels:

The idea of treating as professions the callings of commerce, manufactures and agriculture and of providing them with special professional education is not known here. Yet these great professions stand at the material

interests of every country. They represent the productive forces which the others (lawyers, doctors, clergymen) whatever their value, certainly do not.(44)

At secondary level there should be two aims - to prepare young people for higher level courses in Polytechnic Schools and technical and agricultural colleges and to prepare the children of the working class to fit them for work in industry as craftsmen, and 'enable them to understand the dignity of manual labour and the attractiveness of handicraft'. Similarly at primary school level, manual instruction should be introduced to 'impart handiness' to children. Applying the co-operative and local initiative concepts at secondary level, the Committee advocated two new types of schools - Practical Schools of Agriculture and Practical Schools of Industry and Commerce. There should be local committees formed to manage these schools, appoint teachers (subject to Government approval) with funding being provided either by voluntary subscriptions or local rates or both. The schools should meet the special industrial needs of the locality. The Munster Dairy School in Cork was highlighted as the one outstanding success in this respect. It was rescued and had subsequently thrived solely because of local co-operation.

For those at work during the day, and this would include artisans and apprentices, evening continuation classes were proposed in conjunction with the new Practical Schools, the Art Schools or the Higher Technical Colleges of Agriculture and Industry which, it was proposed, should be set up in towns and cities. In relation to apprenticeship, the Report quoted from the text of the French Practical School Programme:

The apprentice trained at school will soon pass his comrades in the workshops who will not have had this training. (45)

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Even the universities, which up to then according to Plunkett, 'had little regard to the industrial or economic conditions of the country', and had failed to provide the leaders needed, should become involved by the endowment of Chairs of Agriculture and of Applied Science.

**Conclusions of the Committee:**

The general conclusions of the Recess Committee were:

that the administration of State aid to Agriculture and Industry in Ireland..... can be most effectively carried out by including the two branches of Agriculture and Industries and the Technical Education related thereto under the care of one Department of Government specially created for the purpose.

The proposal to amalgamate agriculture and industry under one department was adopted largely on account of the opinion expressed by M. Tiserand, late Director-General of Agriculture in France, and one of the leading authorities in Europe on the administration of State aid to agriculture. (His memorandum to the Committee was copied into the Annual Report of the United States Department of Agriculture for 1896). (46) The new Department was to have a Minister directly responsible to Parliament at its head. It was also to be assisted by a Consultative Council representative of the interests concerned, and to be adequately endowed by the Imperial Treasury.

**Outcome:**

The Report of the Recess Committee was published on the 1st. August 1896, less than a year after the publication of

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Plunkett's letter in the Irish papers. The outcome of the political discussions and agitation generated by the Report was the promulgation by the British Parliament of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899, which established a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland. The first Vice-President of the Department was Sir Horace Plunkett and Mr. T. P. Gill was the first Secretary. A new era in Irish education was beginning to unfold. The comments of the Dominion of Canada Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education (1913) pay a fitting tribute to the work of the Committee:

The members of the Recess Committee rendered such an illustrious and lasting service to the cause of agricultural and industrial education in English-speaking countries that the Commission takes the liberty of recording their names in this Report and of paying its tribute to its work: they have served their own nation well and have enabled Ireland to contribute to the progress of civilisation with increasing advantage to itself and marked benefit to other countries.(47)

The definition of what constituted 'technical instruction' differed as between the 1889 Act, which applied to the United Kingdom, and the 1899 Act which applied only to Ireland. In the first Act, 'technical instruction' did not include 'manual instruction' which involved 'instruction in the use of tools, processes of agriculture and modelling in clay, wood and other material'. In the second Act, however, the definition of technical instruction excluded any instruction given in elementary schools but included instruction in the use of tools, modelling in clay, wood and other material. The term manual instruction had been dropped in the second Act and processes of agriculture were not included in the definition of technical instruction. Why these distinctions were made is not

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clear; one reason might be that manual instruction and processes of agriculture were not regarded as 'education' in Ireland but as skills and knowledge that were learned through practical application in the workplace and for which State funding was not appropriate under laissez-faire philosophy. It could also be that the State was reluctant to interfere with the rights claimed by trade unions to their apprenticeship arrangements.

However, technical instruction under both Acts excluded 'teaching the practice of any trade or industry or employment'. Presumably therefore, technical instruction was not seen as replacing apprenticeship as the means by which young workers were trained for employment and this seems to be borne out by comments from a variety of quarters. The National Board of Education, in expressing the need for industrial and agricultural education in 1837, had stated that the object 'was not to teach trades'. In 1877, Thomas Huxley, Professor of Natural History at the Royal College of Mines in England, in a report on the establishment of the City and Guilds of London Institute, made the following points:

It may be assumed as a necessary consequence of our social condition that no scheme of Technical Education has any chance of working successfully which is calculated to interfere to any serious extent with the existing relations between employers and the employed or which would tend to hinder the son of an artisan from contributing towards his own support as early as he does at present.(48)

His recommendation was to augment the apprenticeship system with local evening classes.

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Another warning was expressed by Professor W. K. Sullivan in his submission to the Samuelson Commission:

So long as we confine our technical teaching to the scientific principles which underlie the processes of manufacture and the rules of art which apply to form, colour and ornament, we do not contravene the maxims of political economy. We may even teach practical agriculture because we only thereby increase the supply of food but we do not practically compete with other agriculturalists. But when we come to the teaching of handicrafts the matter is beset with difficulties of many kinds.

Some of the evidence given to the Samuelson Commission both in Ireland and in England warned that technical instruction for young people would be seen by craft unions as an attempt to set aside their apprenticeship systems and interfere with their livelihood, in particular with the passing on of a trade from father to son. It is interesting that the Commission which had been quite impressed by the French apprenticeship schools and, in its First Report deferred any recommendation on their introduction into the United Kingdom, did not refer to them at all in its Second Report. However in its General Recommendations, it did envisage 'schools attached to works' which would be maintained by employers and trade organisations.

Two contributors to The Irish Builder in 1872, one an employer and the other a very articulate apprentice, outlined their ideas of the educational needs of the apprentice. With reference to the forthcoming Irish Exhibition of Arts, Industries and Manufactures due to open on 5th. June, the employer wrote:

If we are to have a series of architectural drawings and designs on the part of our native architects we want a



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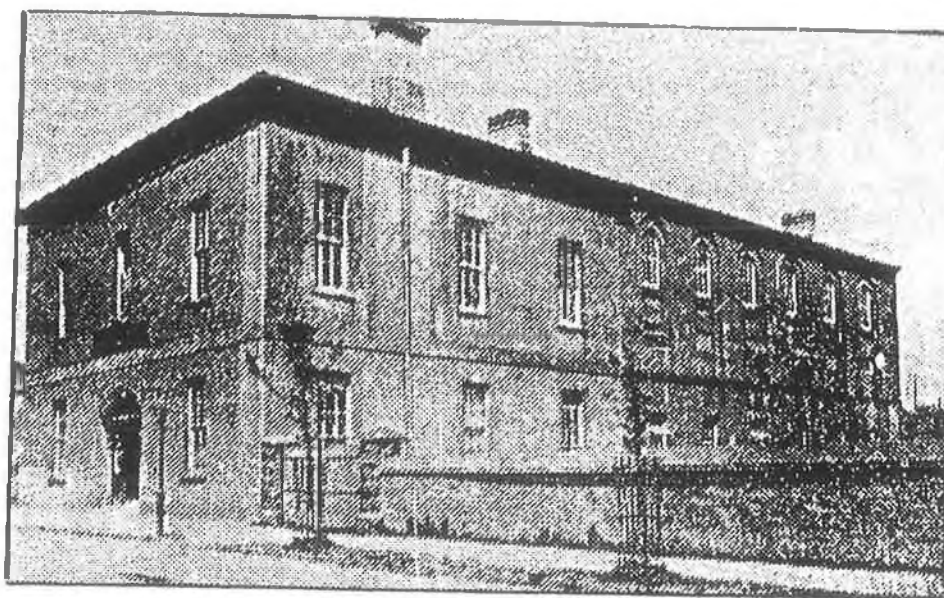
similiar exhibit of the constructive manipulation on the part of our artisans. The working carpenter, stonemason, bricklayer, plasterer and stonecarver would give us 'working drawings', moulds and templates in stong thick paper or polished veneer, with the 'lines', 'curves', 'intersections' and the whole modus operandi of their setting out marked thereon as explanatory directions to other artisans who may be interested. By this means the young apprentices and mechanics of our city and provinces might see at a glance how certain work was prepared in different branches. They might see the theory and understand the practice at once of the development of surfaces in stonecutting, staircases, handrailings, oblique stone courses, soffits, arches, cylinders, cones, columns and domes and the whole application of lines, i.e. practical geometry, to the preparation and the production of the Five Orders and the details belonging. This is what we desire to see in our National Exhibition. This is the type of technical education we desiderate; but we fear that many will reply that we look for or expect too much.

(49)

The apprentice carpenter, who was in his 4th. year, wrote in December 1872, and stated that for the first 3½ years of his apprenticeship he had been 'groping almost in the dark'. When he asked a journeyman why he did something in a certain manner, in most cases the answer was 'that was the way they were taught'. He felt that it was the duty of the foreman to explain in an intelligent manner how to do the job, and when a technical term was used to explain it so as to convey its proper meaning. If this was done he would be of greater benefit to his master. 'From what I see around me' he said, 'I believe it is as bad for a man to know all his business as to be only indifferently acquainted with it'. The best plan was to appear to know nothing as the smart apprentice was not really wanted.

Luck was with this apprentice, however, as in his 4th. year he was placed beside a journeyman who knew the why and wherefore of every line he drew and every cut he made. What both the employer and the apprentice seemed to want was an improvement in the existing system, the idea that what they required could be taught in the classroom had not yet dawned on them. (50)

FIGURE 4



CLONMEL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

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- (35) Ibid., p.536.
- (36) Report: Commission on Tech. Ed.(Ingram) op. cit., p.4.
- (37) K. Byrne, op.cit., p.20.
- (38) Report: Commission on Tech. Ed., (Ingram) op. cit., p.5.
- (39) Report: Dom. of Canada Royal Commission on Industrial Training & Technical Education.(Ottawa: Parmalee, 1913) p.745.
- (40) Trevor West, Horace Plunkett: Educationalist. in Technical Education: Essays Ded. to the Memory of Michael Clune p.40.
- (41) Report: Recess Committee 1896. op.cit., Memorandum; A. Graves, App.O. p.381.
- (42) Ibid., p.377.
- (43) Report: Recess Committee op. cit., pp.4, 5, Footnote.
- (44) Ibid., p.88.
- (45) Ibid., p.95.
- (46) H. Plunkett. op. cit., p.220, Footnote.
- (47) Report: Dom. of Canada Royal Commission. op. cit., p.734.
- (48) Jennifer Lang, City and Guilds of London Institute Centenary, 1878-1978. (London: C&G Institute, 1978) pp.16, 17.
- (49) The Irish Builder, vol.14. No.295. 1/4/1872.
- (50) Ibid., No. 311. 1/12/1872.
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## Chapter Five

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION (DATI)

and

THE IRISH TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION (ITIA)

and

APPRENTICESHIP

### Role and Policy of the DATI:

Following the passing of the 1899 Act, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was established in April 1900. It initially consisted of five branches, Agriculture, Technical Instruction, Fisheries, Statistics and Intelligence, Veterinary and Accounts. In the area of education, the powers and duties of the Board of Education, South Kensington, in relation to the administration of the Science and Art grant, the grant-in-aid of Technical Instruction, the funding of the Science and Art Institutions in Ireland, as well as those of the National Board in connection with the Albert College and the Munster Institute were transferred to the new Department. By the end of May, the Board of Technical Instruction was set up, representative of the County Councils, Urban District Councils, the National Education and the Intermediate Education Boards and with four persons appointed by the Department. Its function was to 'advise the Department on all matters and questions submitted to them by the Department in connection with Technical Instruction'. In addition, the Consultative Committee on Education, representative of the National Board,

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the Intermediate Board, the Agricultural Board and the newly formed Board of Technical Instruction, was set up 'to co-ordinate educational administration'. One of the first issues put by the DATI to the Board of Technical Instruction was the question of how the annual sum of £55,000 provided for technical instruction should be allocated on a triennial basis. Agreement was reached on £25,000 for the County Boroughs and £30,000 for the other local authorities.

With regard to its role generally in technical instruction the DATI saw the task as follows:

In a country like Ireland, where there are not extensive manufactures, and where the majority of the provincial towns are as much rural as urban in their economic characteristics, the problem of Technical Instruction for example, must largely be a problem of how to provide a population mainly agricultural with a training that will fit them not only to give new developments to agriculture, their chief existing industry, but that will also give them in addition aptitudes for industries that do not yet exist, and which their trained intelligence must be the principal factor in creating.(1)

Because of the exceptional conditions in Ireland, the DATI saw itself reluctantly having to become involved in the promotion of industries to which the technical instruction given might be applied. In relation to the training for trades, it envisaged that, outside the large cities, the direct teaching of trades might have to be resorted to for a period. But technical instruction was seen very firmly as part of general education and as an engine for progress:

Technical instruction in its true and permanent conception, as a specialised but organic part of general

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education, whose aim is to so train a man as to render him morally, intellectually and physically master of his best aptitudes and able to apply these aptitudes in every fitting direction that opportunity offers, will always be before the mind of the Department. It is from men so trained, from their inventive brains, their skilful hands their developed and self trustful personality, conscious of powers and seeking for opportunities to use them, that the true advancement of a nation's industries must come.(2)

The DATI saw the leaders of industry coming from a system of secondary education which had a practical side to its operation, specifically related to real economic and social needs, and providing students for universities and higher technical colleges. It regarded the primary schools and the secondary schools as well as the special technical institutes as having their part to play in technical education. On the question of educational opportunity the aspiration was:

There cannot be the most useful educational ambition in a country until the pupil of talent in the humblest elementary school feels that the way is open for him, so far as educational opportunity can open it for him, to the highest careers in industrial, agricultural or academic life.(3)

The policies of the Department were to be implemented in the secondary schools through the administration of the Science and Art Grant to promote its new programmes in Experimental Science, Drawing, Domestic Economy and Manual Instruction, 'without injury to the essential function of the humanities'. As well, evening continuation classes were to be provided to give education to those whose schooling had been terminated when they took up jobs, and special Technical Schools for

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Industries and for Agriculture were to be established either in association with existing schools or otherwise. The need for the training of teachers was recognised and provision was made for this.

**Relationships with Local Authorities:**

The special relationship which existed between the DATI and the local authorities was commented on thus:

The Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act is, so to speak, built into, as well as out of, the system of representative local government established by the legislation of 1898.(4)

Urban Committees for Technical Instruction and, in the case of County Councils, Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committees, were established. Schemes of technical instruction, based on local needs would be prepared by these Committees (with budgetary requirements) and forwarded to the DATI for approval. The initiative to prepare schemes rested with the local committee, and the Department was precluded from making any subvention from State funds unless similiar funds had been provided from the rates. This joint arrangement was seen as having important complementary advantages. On the one hand, the DATI would benefit from local opinions and experience while, on the other hand, committees had to analyse local requirements, be mindful of budgetary constraints and make economic and social choices. Policy making, however, was very firmly in the hands of the Department. By and large, these arrangements worked well although there is on record a dispute between the Department and the Technical Instruction Committee of Dublin Corporation which lasted from 1901 until 1912, during which period approval of schemes, and consequently funds, were

withheld from the Committee. The DATI won out in the end, the overall loser being technical education in the Dublin area, the progress of which was retarded during the period.(5) Another important early development was the formation of the Irish Technical Instruction Association (ITIA), a national umbrella organisation for the Technical Instruction Committees of the local authorities. This body had a standing council and held an annual congress at which delegates from the various committees and representatives from the DATI attended. Motions on technical education were debated publicly, an annual report was published and resolutions passed at Congress were forwarded to the DATI. This body, later to be known as the Irish Technical Education Association and, later still, as the present Irish Vocational Education Association, was founded in 1901 and held its first Congress in Cork in 1902. With the exception of the years 1915, 1916 and 1918, it has continued to hold an annual congress. This has served as a forum for discussion of policy, for the dissemination of information, for the exchange of ideas and as a pressure group on Government through the DATI. Being in touch with employment at local level, it has been instrumental in keeping apprenticeship problems highlighted and in promoting ideas for its improvement.

#### **Initial Attitudes to Technical Education:**

It would appear, initially at any rate, that the concept of technical education was not fully accepted in Ireland. In his 'conversations' with the Dominion of Canada Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, Mr. George Fletcher, assistant secretary in charge of technical education at the DATI, stated 'people in Ireland did not believe that technical education had elements of permanence'.(6) In a paper, The Development of Technical Education in Ireland, Mr. P.J.O'Reilly, who in 1903 had been appointed an instructor in

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Manual Training and Building Trades by the Meath County Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, and who was later to become Chief Executive Officer of the County Tipperary (S.R.) Vocational Education Committee, outlined some of the problems that existed. When he arrived at the village of Clonard to open a class he met a 'large representative farmer' who admitted that he had spent the whole of the previous day canvassing the farmers in the area not to attend the classes. 'Skilled tradesmen such as carpenters, smiths etc.', Mr. O'Reilly wrote, 'looked uneasily at the proposals to form classes in woodwork, metalwork and similiar crafts, they felt their livelihood was at stake'. He also described how in Athboy, when classes in manual instruction were introduced into the primary school there, parents sent their children to schools outside the town rather than allow them to be given such instruction on the grounds 'that they did not want their children to be trained for carpentry or craft work'. Whether this attitude resulted from the career ambitions of parents for their children, seeing jobs in the professions, civil service and the distributive trades as more socially acceptable than those in the decaying industries in the towns, or that their concept of education was a classical one and they did not regard manual training as education at all, is a moot point. Possibly also, there was a stigma attached to the acquisition of manual skills which, after all, were being taught mainly in the workhouses and in the industrial and reformatory schools. To overcome these problems, the DATI organised a series of Pioneer Lectures:

to illustrate the need and use of scientific instruction in agriculture and industries, and to explain to local authorities and the public generally, and especially to the working classes, the manner in which the Department can aid in supplying this need.

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Special syllabi were provided for agriculture lectures and for technical instruction lectures. Among the themes covered in the latter were : the craftsman of the past and the craftsman of the present; the old guilds of handicraft; apprenticeship under modern conditions of labour - its comparative failure; how to supply the lack of trained workers resulting from this. A stand was taken at the Cork Exhibition, in 1901, to explain the main objectives of the Department and the display included samples of work done in English, Scottish and Irish schools, examples of equipment for use in schools and a daily demonstration by Cork pupils of bootmaking 'from raw leather to finished product', using newly acquired modern machinery. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction Journal, prepared by the Intelligence Branch, was also used to promote technical instruction, and articles on apprenticeships in plumbing, printing, bootmaking and confectionery were among those published. Commenting on the Pioneer Lectures, which were given in rural and urban areas, generally during the winter months, Mr.O'Reilly stated in his article that, in all cases when matters were explained, a good enrolment was secured and the classes were very successful. The DATI considered, judged by press reports and other information which it had received, that the lectures had been successful in bringing the value and meaning of technical instruction before the working classes, especially in the smaller centres of population. In many cases the lectures were followed by requests from local committees for help in drawing up schemes of instruction for their areas.

#### **Development of the Technical Education System:**

The First Annual General Report of the DATI for the period 1900--01, and subsequent Reports, provide information on the commencement and development of technical instruction in the

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period 1900 to 1924, when the Department of Education of the Irish Free State was established. Progress had been made from a situation, in 1900, when only fifteen technical schools (excluding those in Belfast), of which five were convent schools, received grants under the Technical Instruction Act of 1889 to the position in 1924, where there were sixty-five technical schools operated by local committees, twenty-two in urban areas and forty-three in county areas. The total enrolment was around 15,600, 56% of which consisted of students of commerce and a further 34% were in domestic science classes. It was the policy of the DATI not to impose a standardised system of technical instruction on the country and, accordingly, the technical instruction committees appointed by the local authorities drafted individual programmes to suit the particular needs of their localities. These schemes were then forwarded to the DATI and, if approved, received the appropriate State subvention. Two forms of technical instruction were provided for: firstly instruction of a general nature involving the teaching of practical science; practice in exercises requiring skill of hand and eye and instruction in economics, all of which would be conducted in day institutions for young persons who had not yet entered on an industrial or commercial career; secondly, technical instruction which had a bearing on specific industries which was directed at those already in employment and which was to be covered by evening classes in urban areas and by 'itinerant' instructors in rural areas. To assist local committees in drawing up their schemes, the Department issued a pamphlet of 'Suggestions' and made its officials available to advise and assist. In the period 1900-01, Belfast and Cork City submitted schemes which were approved while those submitted by Limerick, Waterford and Derry were under consideration. Because of the dispute with the DATI, the Dublin County Borough had not submitted a scheme. Schemes initiated by the urban centres of Wexford, Armagh, Ballina, Ballymena, Blackrock, Coleraine, Kingstown, Lurgan,

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Rathmines and Tipperary were approved as were the schemes of five counties, Carlow, Fermanagh, Galway, Meath and Waterford. In all then, in the first year, seventeen schemes were approved, while a further twenty three were being examined by the DATI - a total of forty, a creditable performance for the initial year. The grants payable by the DATI in respect of the various subjects taught to boys at evening classes showed a decided bias in favour of industrial subjects. Here the amount paid was thirty shillings per pupil per session, as against seven shillings and sixpence for commercial subjects, and fifteen shillings for science and art subjects. Industrial subjects included carpentry and joinery, plumbing, cabinet-making, coachbuilding, typography etc., all of which were to follow the City and Guilds of London Institute programmes.

One of the defects of the 1889 Act was that no provision was made for capital expenditure for the erection of buildings, and, initially, instruction mainly by evening classes took place in rented accommodation. This often included old churches, mills, ware-houses and, in the case of Naas, in a structure on top of which was the tank providing the town's water supply. Some places were, however, more fortunate. In Clonmel, where the first meeting of the local committee took place in the Town Hall on 12th. December 1901, a portion of the old Mechanics' Institute was rented for £50 per year. When the school opened the following year, the pupils who enrolled were already in employment and classes were organised in the afternoons and at night. Old photographs, taken in 1902, show well-equipped engineering, woodwork, art and science rooms, which were lighted by gas-light.(7) The question of capital for the provision of buildings was solved when committees were allowed to borrow money for this purpose, on the understanding that the interest payable would be a first charge on the amount provided by the rates.

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The 1901-02 Report shows the DATI well pleased with the progress being made although it admitted that the transition 'from a time honoured method in which the text-book ruled supreme' to one where the student was expected to discover the facts for himself was 'abrupt and somewhat of a revolution'. As regards technical instruction this Report says:

The feature most worthy of noting here..... is the great zeal displayed by the Technical Instruction Committees of the local authorities in all parts of the country and the avidity with which, in most instances, the instruction provided has been availed of by those classes for whom it is intended.

At this stage fifty one schemes, twenty-four urban and twenty-seven county, had been approved. In the City of Dublin Technical Institute at Kevin Street, 282 students attended classes in electrical and mechanical engineering, carpentry, plumbing, metalwork, shoemaking and painting and decorating. However the overall attendance in Dublin, 380, was very poor by comparison with the 3,385 who attended in Belfast. Special mention was made in the Report of the boot and shoemaking classes in Cork where the most modern equipment had been installed:

On the opening night forty five students joined the class and applications had to be refused from twenty five others. This class was largely apprentices, the working men being largely excluded because they did not apply in time.

This Report also stated that 5,000 girls were engaged in classes, mainly organised by nuns, in lace making, crochet work and allied industries such as embroidery, for which the DATI supplied drawings with instructions.

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By 1903, the attendance at urban technical classes had reached 8,570 and, as 69% of these were already working in industry and commerce, the DATI considered that 'the influence on trades, industries and commerce, cannot be but far-reaching'. So many trade students were attending classes that it was felt that the technical schools might be more appropriately called trade schools. Obviously too, many of the students were both able and ambitious and saw the classes as opening the possibilities of promotion in industry and commerce. But problems were beginning to be identified as well. In the first place, many of the students had left primary school early and were ill-prepared for the instruction being provided, so that much of the time in class had to be devoted to preparatory work. This had a negative effect on the morale of teachers as well as the better prepared students who perceived that the real aims of technical education were not being achieved. There was also the problem of insufficient funds as well as:

the apathetic, if not unsympathetic, attitude of many workers and of not a few foremen and employers. In striking contrast there are many cases where employers press their apprentices to join the Technical School. If the majority of Principals would follow the lead of the few, who by visits to works, interviews with masters and conferences with men have secured trade students for the schools, the whole-hearted support of masters, foremen and managers and have done something to bring about that close relationship between industry and commerce on the one hand and technical instruction on the other which experience has shown to be essential for the success of both.

There was also the situation that young persons at work during the day could not be expected to devote so much of their time to evening classes. The most that could be expected of them was two to three evenings per week so there were high absentee



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rates. The identification of these problems led to a series of interventions in an effort to overcome them. The first of these was the establishment of Day Trades Preparatory Schools, initially in Belfast and in Limerick. They were intended to overcome the situation of students whose previous education had not fitted them to take full advantage of technical classes.(8) They were not seen as competing with existing schools but were aimed at retaining the most promising boys leaving the primary schools for a further course in a curriculum geared to their future careers. It was hoped that employers, when recruiting apprentices, would employ the products of these schools. This new type of school fulfilled a need from the employers' point of view, and as well, created a better atmosphere for relations between industry and technical education. Commenting on the opening of a Day Trades Preparatory School in Kilkenny, in 1905, the DATI Report stated:

Continued progress in this direction is looked for and the foundation of apprentice classes with the aid and active interest of employers has already begun.(9)

The 1904-05 Report also commented that the courses being provided were receiving increasing approval and interest from the trade unions who were taking steps to secure the best possible instruction in subjects related to their trades. A further development, during 1905, was the introduction of industrial scholarships tenable at Day Trades Preparatory Schools, with 128 being awarded in Belfast and 27 and 6 respectively in Kilkenny and Ringsend.(10) Up to then, scholarships had been tenable only at academic secondary schools and this new development was aimed at attracting the better pupil to technical schools. The DATI funded three-quarters of the scholarships, the rest coming from local rates. The industrial scholarship scheme largely failed, the boys for whom they were intended still preferring to go to secondary

schools, and, in 1913, the scheme was replaced by apprentice scholarships, again tenable at Day Trades Preparatory Schools for boys already apprenticed or who intended to be apprenticed. These scholarships guaranteed the apprentice fifteen shillings per week until he was out of his time, provided he attended the Trades School for the first two years and evening classes for the rest of his apprenticeship.

#### **Technical Education and Industrial Development - An Example:**

It was the intention that the system of technical education which developed from the various Acts of Parliament, and as operated by the DATI and the local authorities through their committees, should make provision for local industries and encourage local entrepreneurship. One of the best documented examples of the realisation of this intention relates to the revival of the coach and carriage building industry in Clonmel, which had been in decline there since the introduction of the railways finally put an end to the transport operations of Charles Bianconi. In 1899, a small carriage building works was set up in the town by two brothers named O'Gorman. One of them, John, availed of the facilities for technical education in the local technical school, as a result of which he was awarded a first class honours certificate in Road Carriage Building from the City and Guilds of London Institute. A class in coach building was formed and Mr. O'Gorman was appointed teacher. The result was that the carriage industry in the town was dramatically revived, so much so that, in 1922, there were more than a dozen such firms there with sufficient apprentices to supply a Day School for the trade, and Clonmel cars carried off many prizes at shows throughout the country for their quality. Apprentice scholarships were available for the course but an advertisement, in 1922, stated 'scholarships offered by the Department frequently cannot be awarded because

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they are not applied for'. The small firm begun by the O'Gorman brothers in 1899, expanded to become the limited company of O'Gorman Brothers, with John O'Gorman as chairman, which opened an extensive factory in Clonmel, in 1922, employing 200 skilled tradesmen. It was Horace Plunkett's dream come true.(11)

#### **Development of Day-Release Classes:**

Other developments in the apprenticeship area around this time were the setting up of permanent Agricultural Stations for the training of farm apprentices, in 1909, at Ballyhaise, Athenry and Clonakilty, and the Forestry apprenticeship system based on the Avondale Forestry Station, in 1910. There were also some tentative efforts to organise day release courses for apprentices in some areas. In Belfast, for example, in 1913, engineering and draughtsman apprentices, nominated by certain employers, were allowed to attend special day-release classes at the Technical Institute from 9.30 to 4.30 on Mondays and it was anticipated that a similiar privilege might be given by other employers. The Institute provided reports to employers on the progress of their apprentices and notified them of any absences from classes. Similiarly, printing trade apprentices in Belfast attended classes on Mondays from 2.30 to 6.30 in the afternoon. In the case of Clonmel it was stated by Mr. P.J.O'Reilly, in a paper, The Development of Technical Education in Ireland:

After considerable persuasion some Employers agreed to release their employees for day classes but, very often, the calls of business influenced the attendance which was often rather irregular. In Clonmel an attempt was made to secure a more regular attendance by adopting the system followed in some parts of the Continent namely holding such classes early in the morning, before the apprentices

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were due for attendance at the works. The attempt was partly successful.(12)

The 1909-10 Report of the DATI referred to day trade courses for apprentices which were conducted at convenient hours during the day, and not later than 6 p.m., and refers to courses in Limerick, Fermoy, Clonmel, Waterford and Tralee. In the case of Fermoy, the master builders there 'have acted in a praiseworthy manner in having permitted their apprentices to attend day classes each year since the session 1906-07'. However, although the concept of day-release for apprentices was regarded as being of value, its implementation on any satisfactory scale was difficult, even in urban areas, except with the more enlightened employers. For apprentices in rural areas, because of travel and other difficulties, such as achieving viable classes, it was almost impossible.

By 1913, developments in technical education would appear to have reached a plateau. Progress in Belfast was considered to be very much in advance of that in other cities and large towns. The position in Dublin was not considered to be satisfactory and the DATI Report for 1912-1913 stated that the city:

has not yet formulated a definite policy and most of the work of this centre at present consists of small unrelated classes of an elementary character.

Technical school buildings were now considered suitable for their immediate needs, attendances at evening classes in the urban areas 'have now reached what may, under existing educational legislation, be regarded as normal figures'. It was felt that increases in attendances could only be secured by retaining pupils for a longer period in the schools. All local authority schemes were working satisfactorily and there had

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been no major changes in existing schemes. A system of examinations was set up in May, 1913, at which 2,000 students presented themselves. A period of consolidation had set in with priority being given to the cultivation of closer links with employers as the DATI Report for 1912-13 indicates:

Employers must be induced to take a closer interest in the efforts of our Technical Schools to train their workers. The schools themselves will benefit from the advice of employers.(13)

One continuing problem with the Day Trades Preparatory Schools was that the numbers attending did not make it possible, generally, to provide instruction specific to particular trades. This was a situation which, it was felt, could be improved by new legislation whereby employers would be required to release their apprentices for technical instruction. The existing position was that the instruction provided was that judged to be the most generally suited to all trades, although there was a bias towards engineering, 'this being the trade to which the majority of the pupils are shaping their careers'.

One other significant development in apprenticeship was the setting up in Bolton St. College in Dublin, in 1917, of full time two-year intensive courses which took the place of the first and second years of apprenticeship. Apprentice scholarships were awarded in specific trades, based on the results of an entrance examination for boys over fourteen years of age. Instruction was given for thirty hours each week, for forty weeks each year, and had a more practical orientation than the Day Trade Preparatory Course and 'During training the pupil is virtually an apprentice and on entering the trade is paid at the third year rate'.(14) In 1926, there were 106 apprentices attending in the following trades: carpentry and

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joinery; cabinet-making; electrical engineering; painting and decoration; motor car engineering; plumbing; printing; sheet metalwork and quantity surveying. The number admitted to the courses for the various trades was decided in consultation with employers and trade unions, to ensure that apprenticeship places were available for students at the end of the course. The Dublin Committee had a somewhat similiar course in dressmaking for girls. This course was originally of two years duration, and firms in the city had agreed to take apprentices for dressmaking from the technical school.(15)

From 1914 onwards events at international and national level began to shape a new Ireland. The first Great War, the 1916 Rebellion, the War of Independence, the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and the Civil War all created their own turmoil. As a result of the Government of Ireland Act, the DATI lost responsibility for the six northern counties and the Board of Technical Education was abolished. In the Irish Free State, the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924 established two new government departments, one for Lands and Agriculture and one for Education. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, the brain child of the Recess Committee, ceased to exist.

#### **The Irish Technical Instruction Association (ITIA):**

The implementation of the technical education system as set up by the legislation was a co-operative affair with the DATI exercising overall control in relation to policy making, approval of schemes, providing advice and assistance and operational and financial inspection, and the local Technical Instruction Committees responsible for operations on the ground, submission of schemes, provision of buildings, equipment and teachers and for ensuring that the particular

needs of their localities were catered for. They had to run the system, but in many cases they also made the running in relation to policy matters. This was particularly so when the Committees formed the Irish Technical Instruction Association (ITIA), in 1901, and organised annual congresses with delegates representing every Committee. Each Congress was hosted by the local Committee, the Press were invited to attend and the proceedings were open to the public. Representatives of the DATI were also in attendance. These Congresses were a forum for public debate, a place where new ideas and new developments were promoted and resolutions debated and passed. The Association acted as a pressure group, not only on the DATI, but also on Government through public representatives. Comprehensive Reports of Congress were printed and circulated from 1905 onwards. In many cases, local Committees provided a printed Souvenir of the occasion. The Honorary Secretary for many years was Fr.P.J.Dowling, C.M. from Cork, who had been one of the Pioneer lecturers.

**Apprenticeship and the ITIA:**

Being very much in touch with problems at local level, delegates to Congress seemed to be frequently concerned with apprenticeship matters, and problems associated with them were discussed at many of their meetings. At the 1904 Congress in Dublin, a resolution was passed to the effect that Parliamentary representatives should be approached 'with a view to having legislation that would oblige masters to require attendance at technical centres before indentures could be given'. The Parliamentary representatives advised that there was no chance of such legislation being passed, so that at the Limerick Congress in 1905, a similiar resolution, to the effect that local pressure should be brought to bear on masters to induce them to include in the indentures a clause with

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regard to technical training, was passed. And at the same Congress the following resolution was passed unanimously:

That the time at disposal of the apprentice being entirely inadequate, we urge upon employers the desirability of granting further opportunities by allowing their apprentices a few hours leave upon such days as they undertake to attend the Technical School classes; and furthermore we impress upon the organisations of workmen the importance of increasing their practical interest in Technical Education.(16)

In Galway in 1909 , a delegate from Co. Meath, in a debate on the level of attendance at continuation schools remarked that the system of education in primary schools for the past 25 years 'may have created a distaste for manual work - even the genteel attendants behind the counter look with something like distain on the mere mechanic'. There was also a debate on improving relations between Technical Committees and employers and trade unions and it was suggested that a scheme of technical education should be devised that would reduce the term of apprenticeship.(17) A plan for the introduction of a comprehensive scheme for training young persons for hotel-keeping was put forward by a delegate from Wicklow at the Sligo Congress, in 1910. A proposal to set up an Irish Examining Body was also discussed at this meeting but was opposed by Mr. George Fletcher from the DATI on the grounds that it could not compete with the City and Guilds which had a very high standing in Ireland and England. The Municipal School of Technology in Manchester was the venue for the Congress of 1911, at which Mr. Fletcher gave a comprehensive lecture entitled 'A Decade of Technical Instruction in Ireland', in the course of which he announced the introduction of scholarships which:



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would carry a boy from the Primary School, through a Trades Preparatory School and will maintain him throughout his apprenticeship, ceasing only when he becomes a journeyman.

It was hoped that this would be of particular benefit to boys from rural areas who wished to pursue a career in industry. Mr.T.P.Gill, Secretary of the DATI, read a paper at the Bangor Congress, in 1913, on 'Citizenship and Technical Instruction'. Referring to apprenticeship under the old craft guild system and how it inculcated citizenship, Mr. Gill had this to say:

If you want to find the secret of the dignity of the medieval craftsman and of the independence and valour of the medieval burgess, you will find some of that secret in what was thus borne in upon him during his process of technical education. Now, modern industry with its mechanical inventions, its specialisations and its combinations of capital and modern democracy, between them have broken up that system. Only a sort of wreckage remains. We cannot restore it. We cannot get back if we would the apprenticeship exactly as it was, or the craft guild as it was. We must be of our time. .... The technical school is the modern workingman's professional college; it is even his university, a place of learning where he can carry his development very far .... to get him to realise this ownership and its significance for him is part of our task. (18)

'The Relations Between Employers and Technical Instruction Committees' was the title of a paper by the Principal of Rathmines College at the Killarney Congress, in 1914. He considered that four steps were necessary to encourage employers to facilitate their employees to take systematic courses of technical studies: convince them of the desirability

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of training; facilitate them when making out time tables; get them to encourage their employees to attend by giving incentives and removing obstacles and by proving to them that there is a benefit in it for them, too. At this Congress, also, Dr. Garrett from the DATI lectured on 'The Technical Training of Skilled And Unskilled Workers in France and Germany'.(19)

### **The Advent of the Irish Free State:**

The Congress held in Clonmel, in 1922, was a very interesting one in a number of ways. It was the first Congress to be held after the foundation of the Irish Free State and was officially opened by Alderman Frank Drohan, the first Sinn Fein Mayor of the town. In his address Mr. Drohan remarked:

This will be another historic link in the history of our town, because it is the first Congress held under the new conditions in our country and your decisions and recommendations will get a more sympathetic hearing than they have got in the past.

Mr P.J.O'Reilly, then Principal of the Clonmel Central Technical Institute, read a wide ranging paper 'The Training of Apprentices - Some Necessary Reforms', which analysed the defects in the technical education system as far as apprentices were concerned and advocated their compulsory attendance at technical classes within working hours. He summarised the current position as follows:

Owing to the selfishness of some employers, the prejudice of some of the older craftsmen, the attitude of the trade unions regarding uniformity of wages and the exceptionally defective primary education of many apprentices, the useful work done by the Technical Schools under the

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present system of voluntary attendance is only a small fraction of what would be possible under a system of compulsory attendance within working hours. (20)

What he envisaged was a systematic method for the recruitment and training of apprentices. Local boards of employers, trade unions and persons nominated by the educational authorities should be formed in every area with responsibility for registering apprentices or intending apprentices and ensuring that proper training facilities were provided. No boy should be accepted into a technical school or into apprenticeship unless he possessed a leaving certificate from a primary school. He referred to a statement in the Annual Report of the DATI for 1917-18:

At the same time it is significant that we have in attendance at any centre scarcely more than one-fifth of the apprentices engaged in any specific trade; that one-half of these attend for only one year, about one-quarter for two years, and only about one-hundredth part of the available apprentices complete a four year course. This state of things is inherent in the voluntary system and cannot be materially improved until the strain caused by extra evening work is removed.(21)

Following the Congress, Mr.T.P.Gill, Secretary of the DATI, himself a Tipperaryman, obviously moved by a sense of history and recognising the end of an era, wrote to the Chairman of the Clonmel Technical Instruction Committee, Mr. James Reidy. Among his comments were:

The whole event of Congress I regard as very significant in many ways and of great encouragement for our country in a dark-looking hour. Unshaken and undisturbed it upheld one of the noblest traditions of the system we have built

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up together in this organisation of ours - that of Irishmen of all parties and creeds and from all parts of Ireland working together in common constructive effort in a national body, .....(22)

### **A Plan for Apprenticeship:**

At a meeting of Standing Council held at the Clonmel Congress a motion to establish a committee to consider and report on a method of securing the regular attendance of apprentices at technical schools during the period of their apprenticeship was adopted. At the Congress held in Dublin, in 1923, a committee was appointed for this purpose. Professor B.F. Sheilds, Professor of Commerce at U.C.D was appointed Chairman and Mr. P.J. O'Reilly was appointed Honorary Secretary. The Report of this Committee was considered and adopted by Standing Council on the 9th. April 1924. The recommendations contained in the Report were :

1. That such additional powers be granted to Technical Instruction Committees as will enable them:

To secure information regarding the names, ages, and occupations of young persons under the age of 18 years employed within the respective administrative areas.

To provide that in indentures or agreements between employers and apprentices, or between Trade Unions or (stet) Apprentices, the indentures or other forms of agreement shall contain a condition securing the continued education of Apprentices during the period of their apprenticeships and requiring Apprentices to avail themselves of such facilities; this continued education to involve not less than one hundred and twenty hours of day-

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time instruction during each session, and for not less than three sessions during the apprenticeship period.

To largely increase the number of scholarships enabling promising students from less favoured districts to obtain specialised instruction at the better equipped and developed Technical Institutes in the larger centres, thus co-relating the whole system of Technical Instruction.

To secure the efficient technical training and civic education of apprentices during out of work periods.

2. That Technical Instruction Committees be authorised to form sub-committees, largely composed of representatives of employers and Trade Unions for the purpose of advising in regard to the training of Apprentices.

3. That a deputation be appointed to wait on the Minister of Education of the Free State to urge the foregoing recommendations .....

The deputation appointed consisted of the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Irish Technical Instruction Association as well as: Mr. Ellis, T.C., Cork; Professor Shields, Dublin; Mr. P.J. O'Reilly, Clonmel; Mr. Thomas Johnson, T.D., representing the trade unions, and Mr. John Good, a Dublin employer. (23)

And so it was that, through the efforts of the Irish Technical Instruction Association, the problems of the education and training of apprentices became an issue for the Minister in the new Department of Education in the Government of the Irish Free State. Even though the DATI had gone, the Irish Technical Instruction Association continued in existence, becoming the Irish Technical Education Association (ITEA) around 1930, and is nowadays known as the Irish Vocational Education Association

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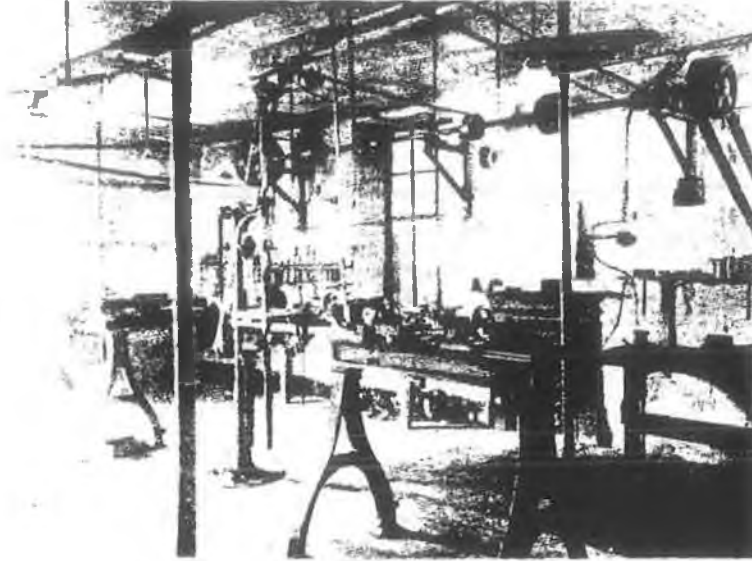
(IVEA). Interestingly, it continued to meet as an all-Ireland body, with representatives from the six northern counties attending Congress meetings, until 1933, when the Congress was held in Belfast. In a lecture entitled 'The Irish Technical Instruction Association - Its Early Years' delivered at the Galway Congress in 1927, Mr. George Fletcher, who had served as assistant secretary both with the DATI and the Technical Instruction Branch of the Department of Education, stated:

Such a system of Technical Education as we have today can only be carried out successfully with the cordial co-operation of local authorities, and the work of the Association has rendered enormous service in fostering this spirit. It has formed an admirable link between the Department and the local Educational Authorities.(24)

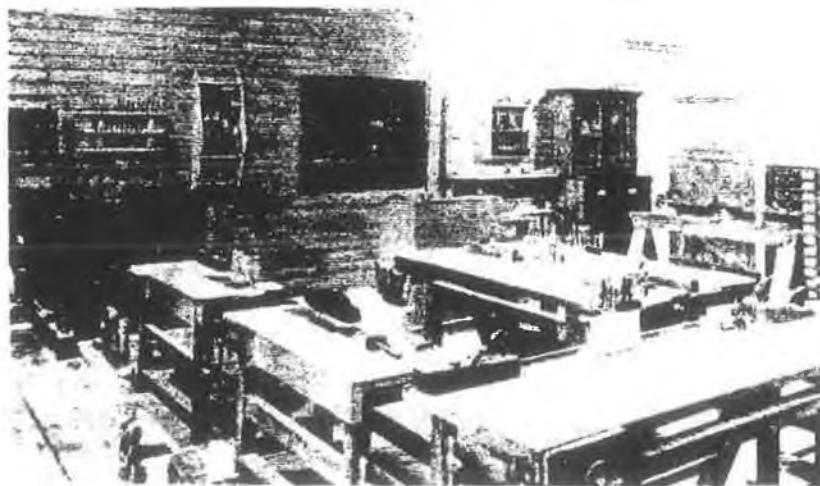
### **Conclusion:**

In the period from 1900 to 1924, against a background of international as well as national turmoil, a system of technical education, non-denominational in character, had been formulated and developed in Ireland. It had been put in place by a State department working in co-operation with local bodies, and, if it did not meet all the aspirations of those who conceived it, it laid the foundations on which our present system is built and it complemented the primary, secondary and university sectors. In addition, the 'wreckage' of the apprenticeship system had been salvaged and a plan for its reorganisation to meet modern requirements had been formulated.

FIGURE 5



ENGINEERING ROOM 1902



WOODWORK ROOM 1902

WORKSHOPS IN CLONMEL TECHNICAL SCHOOL IN 1902

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## Chapter Six

### APPRENTICESHIP AND THE COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL EDUCATION

#### 1. Political, Administrative, and Economic Background.

##### Introduction:

The Commission on Technical Education - the Ingram Commission - set up by Professor John Marcus O'Sullivan, Minister for Education of Saorstát Éireann, under the chairmanship of Mr. John Ingram, Senior Inspector of Technical Instruction in the Department, held its first meeting on the 5th. October, 1926. Its terms of reference were:

To enquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstát Éireann in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry. (1)

The Commission submitted its Report exactly one year later, on the 5th. October, 1927. As a result of this Report and its ninety-two recommendations, two new Acts were promulgated by the Oireachtas. These were the Vocational Education Act, 1930, - an Act to make further and better provision in relation to continuation education and technical education - and the Apprenticeship Act, 1931, - an Act to make better provision for the regulation of apprenticeship in certain trades. As far as the training and education of apprentices was concerned these two Acts were intended to complement each other. As well as taking evidence and receiving submissions from many interested parties in Ireland, the Ingram Commission studied developments both in the area of apprenticeship and of technical education in other countries. Before undertaking a detailed study of the Report and its recommendations and of the evidence submitted, a brief account of the political, administrative and economic situation in the new Irish Free State is necessary to establish the circumstances in which the legislation was enacted.

##### Political Background:

In 1926, Ireland had only recently emerged from a ten year period of turbulence which included the Great War of 1914-18, the 1916 Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War of Independence, 1919-21, and a year of civil war which ended in May, 1923. It was a decade of profound political change which witnessed the partition of Ireland, and the creation of a new, independent Irish state. The Government of Ireland Act, 1920, was

Westminster's response to the events of the previous year when, following their victory in a general election, the Sinn Fein deputies assembled in Dublin and set up Dail Eireann, proclaiming it to be the parliament of the Irish Republic. Some months later the War of Independence began. Unionists' fears were greatly heightened by these events and their demands for government action intensified. The 1920 Act provided for two Home Rule parliaments, one - the Parliament of Northern Ireland - for the six north-eastern counties; the other - the Parliament of Southern Ireland - for the remaining twenty-six counties. General elections were held the following year and the Northern Ireland parliament was set up with a form of limited self government. The 'Southern Ireland' election was used by Sinn Fein to choose the membership of the second Dail Eireann. The War of Independence was brought to an end by a truce, in July, 1921. This was followed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty which was ratified by a small majority of the Dail on 7th. January, 1922. Under the terms of the treaty the new twenty-six county state - Saorstad Eireann (the Irish Free State) - had achieved political independence, albeit with compulsory Dominion status and with the retention of the Oath of Allegiance to the British monarch, and had been given 'a degree of autonomy ..... which few Irishmen ever expected to see realised in their lifetime' ..... (2). In 1922, the first Irish Constitution was adopted and the first general election was held, resulting in a pro-treaty majority. The pro-treaty group split from Sinn Fein and formed the Cumann na nGael party, in 1922, under W.T.Cosgrave. The anti-treaty group, retaining the old title of Sinn Fein, and with De Valera as leader, refused to take their seats in the new Dail because of the requirement to take the Oath of Allegiance as provided for in the Constitution. This resulted in the Cumann na nGael party having an overall Dail majority and it therefore formed the government of the Irish Free State with Arthur Griffith as president of the Executive Council. The erstwhile revolutionaries, now in Government, were faced with the practicalities of establishing and running the new state. Within two months of taking office, the new Government suffered three major set-backs, the outbreak of the Civil War, the death of its President, Arthur Griffith, and the killing, ten days later, of General Michael Collins, the Commander-in-Chief of the Free State Army, in an ambush in west Cork. W.T.Cosgrave succeeded Griffith as President of the Executive Council.

The Constitution provided for a government consisting of an executive council of between five and seven ministers, all of whom should be elected members of the Dail, and such other 'extern' ministers as would provide a total ministry of not more than twelve. These extern ministers were to be chosen by the Dail but need not be members of that body - a form of two-tier executive.(3) This Government immediately initiated and implemented a programme of legislation to provide an

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administration which would cater for the day-to-day running of the State. This initiative has been described as follows:

By any standards this programme would have been a formidable achievement, but at a time when much of Ireland was still in the grip of a Civil War or its aftermath, it was an astonishing performance.(4)

The administrative vehicle for this programme was the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924, the objective of which was to get rid of the haphazard system of boards and councils which existed under British rule and to establish instead a more rational and coherent structure. Eleven ministerial departments were set-up as follows: the President of the Executive Council; Finance; Justice; Local Government and Public Health; Lands and Agriculture; Industry and Commerce; Fisheries; Posts and Telegraphs; Education; Defence, and External Affairs. These ministries remained practically unchanged up to the outbreak of World War 2. Another problem facing W. T. Cosgrave and his inexperienced but innovative ministers was that many of the new Irish civil servants had been transferred from the British service and the principal requirement of the situation, as they saw it, was that there should be continuity and not change. They saw their role as administering the system as it existed so that 'After 1922 Merrion Street became Whitehall writ small'.(5)

#### **The Department of Education:**

Among the earliest tasks undertaken by the Government was the rationalisation of the education system. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) was abolished with the agricultural element, including agricultural education, forming part of the new Department of Lands and Agriculture. The Technical Instruction Branch of the DATI joined the National Board and the Intermediate Board in the new Department of Education while its industrial development function was transferred to the new Department of Industry and Commerce. All of these changes were not accomplished without some considerable upset. This is evident in a comment by George Fletcher, who had been assistant secretary in charge of technical education in the DATI since 1904 and was now finding himself increasingly isolated. He wrote in a private memorandum as follows:

On the whole 1923 is the worst year I have known. Gill (former Secretary of the DATI) retired in the spring ... A Ministers' Bill is passing through in the Dail under which Technical Education will go over to the M. of E. Tant mieux! Nothing could be worse than the present conditions with a Minister of Agriculture who won't decide and refers on to a Ministry of Education who cannot. I can see no

sign of any belief in me though they perceive that they can hardly get on without me.(6)

### **Economic Policy:**

As regards economic affairs, the new Free State Government, as well as the Irish people at large, were faced with the fact that political independence, in so far as it had been achieved by the Treaty, did not of itself guarantee economic freedom. At its first session on the 21st. January, 1919, Dail Eireann approved a document called the Democratic Programme. Its origin is obscure but, among other things, it reflected the Sinn Fein policy of economic independence through the protection of native industry and declared 'the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation's labour'.(7) The Dail approved the Programme and so committed itself to positions on social and economic issues which, later, it was unable or unwilling to sustain and the Democratic Programme became a dead letter.

What had been envisaged by Sinn Fein was an industrial revolution, on the same lines as that which had occurred in the north of Ireland, which would provide employment, create wealth and make the country self sufficient. However, the economic facts of life were that:

The Irish Free State remained part of an economic complex of which the United Kingdom was, as before, the predominant partner. The Irish monetary system was firmly tied to sterling, Irish commerce continued, for the time being at least, to be conducted within the framework of free trade and ninety or more percent of Irish exports still looked to Britain and Northern Ireland for their markets.(8)

In 1926, 53% of those at work were engaged in agriculture and only about 13% were in non-agricultural production. The country, therefore, was under-industrialised and was not even in a position to supply items such as boots and shoes, clothing, furniture and other household goods. To meet its commitment under the Sinn Fein 'Democratic Programme' and to provide work, with consequential reductions in the levels of unemployment and emigration, the establishment of native manufacturing industries was a priority. In retrospect, in 1958, in his study Economic Development, T. K. Whitaker summed up the difficulties facing the new State in this regard:

The lack of an industrial tradition, managerial skill, risk capital and native raw materials, with a heavily industrialised country as a close neighbour, made the new State's task of establishing industries particularly difficult. An extensive system of protective tariffs and

quotas was needed to aid the infant industries and to overcome traditional consumer preferences, large-scale advertising of British products and, in many cases, higher domestic costs of production.(9)

But there were other difficulties as well. Griffith, the originator of the policy of Sinn Fein, was dead and 'not even the ablest members of Cosgrave's government had a completely coherent economic philosophy, in which both agricultural and industrial development equally fitted'.(10) As a result of the Treaty, the Free State had been cut off from the industrial area around Belfast. Industrial skills and training were in short supply and the civil service and the economists tended to promote British liberal and laissez-faire policies. The imposition of tariffs on British manufactured goods was seen as a two-edged weapon which could result in retaliation against Irish agricultural exports and the brewing and distilling industries which were heavily dependent on these. Tariffs would also raise costs for the agricultural sector. Some positive economic advances were made; there was a trend towards the encouragement of specialisation in the livestock and dairy sectors; a Tariff Commission was set up, in 1926, to examine the case for protective tariffs but made limited progress initially; the construction of the Shannon Scheme to provide hydro-electricity began at Ardnacrusha in 1925; the development of the sugar-beet industry was planned and there were investigations into the use of peat resources.

This, then, was the political, administrative and economic background when Professor O'Sullivan, the second Minister for Education in the first Free State Government - (the first, Eoin McNeill having resigned in 1925 in a controversy over a leaked report of the Boundary Commission of which he was a member) - established the Commission on Technical Education in 1926.

## 2. Technical Education

### Underlying Criteria for the Commission:

- It was obvious from the terms of reference of the Commission that the Minister was concerned with the utilitarian aspects of technical education. This concern was extended and strengthened in a letter from him to the Chairman which was read at the first meeting of the Commission.(11) In the first place, he included the 'probable' requirements of trade and industry in addition to the existing needs and referred to the industrial and economic progress that was 'expected to result from the Shannon Electricity Scheme and other recent or pending industrial developments'. He outlined that one of the chief tasks would be an examination of how trade and industry, including agriculture, were being retarded through a lack of

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technical education, so as to provide information on which the Commission could advise on a system of technical education that would meet the needs of the community, in urban areas, in rural areas and in Irish-speaking districts, and how this would be administered and financed. He wanted advice also, on the training of teachers and whether or not technical education should be compulsory, and within what limits.

Specifically in relation to technical training for employment, he felt that the two chief problems to be addressed were whether it should be the policy of the Department of Education to provide for technical education prior to employment, or parallel with employment, or both, and the connection of such training with the apprenticeship system. In his letter, he drew particular attention to the necessity to ascertain the views of employers and employees on the relationship between technical education and apprenticeship:

Unless there is clear evidence that employers and employees consider an effective training in an apprenticeship school a satisfactory method of entrance to a trade there can be no guarantee that it will be practicable to incorporate the Schemes of Technical Training as an essential part of the apprenticeship system.(12)

While such a scheme might produce large numbers of highly skilled craftsmen, unless these would be absorbed by trade and industry, the costs involved in such training would not be warranted. He gave it as one of the chief tasks of the Commission:

to discover as far as possible to what extent the employers and the employees consider that specialised training in the Technical System can and should become one of the main methods of entrance to skilled trades.(13)

The Minister also considered that it was of very great importance that provision should be made to give preparatory trade training to young persons in the Gaeltacht areas. Finally, although he did stress the utilitarian aspect of technical education, he also emphasised the personal development role of education in general by making the point that no matter how effective a system of technical instruction was, in the narrow vocational context, 'it will fail in one of its chief purposes if it does not uplift every man, not merely as a member of his trade, but as a member of the community and a member of the State.' (14)

The constitution of the Commission was, in itself, interesting and was an indication of the Minister's desire to involve, not only the various government departments concerned, as well as the Oireachtas, but also to avail of foreign educational

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expertise from highly industrialised overseas economies. The Chairman, John Ingram, was a senior inspector in the new Department of Education where he reported directly to George Fletcher, who had been in charge of technical education for almost twenty-five years. Fletcher, who was being pushed to one side, regarded this appointment as the final snub, and although he agreed to give evidence to the Commission, and did so, he had already submitted his resignation, to take effect from April 1927, thus ending the link with the DATI.(15) The Departments of Lands and Agriculture, Finance, and Industry and Commerce were involved and a headmaster represented the technical schools. The Oireachtas was represented by two Dail deputies, one, Mr. John Good, an Independent and a Dublin businessman, who was an active advocate of business interests in the Dail and who, incidentally, had been a member of the deputation to the Minister from the Irish Technical Instruction Association on apprenticeship reform, in 1924. The other was Mr. Hugh Colohan, a Labour deputy and a social activist from Newbridge, Co. Kildare. Foreign expertise was provided by Professor A. Rhon, President of the Federal Polytechnicum in Zurich and Mr. Nils Fredriksson, a member of the Swedish Board of Education and of the Board of Governors of the Royal Technical School, Stockholm. Both of these experts provided memoranda on the Swiss and Swedish education systems, respectively, which were included in the Report as appendices.(16) In all the Commission held seventy-five meetings, at forty-seven of which evidence was taken from a total of one hundred and twenty-nine witnesses, representing government departments, members of technical instruction committees and their chief officers, employer and worker organisations, teachers and twenty-six other individual witnesses. The Shannon Electricity Scheme and the Irish Sugar Beet factory at Carlow were visited as were classes and schools throughout the country. The Commission submitted its Report on the 5th. October 1927, exactly a year after its first meeting.

It was only to be expected that a priority task of a new native Irish government would be a reform of the educational system in its nationalistic, cultural and utilitarian aspects. The view of the Protestant Archbishop Whateley, one of the earlier Commissioners of the National Board, that the aim of the national school system was to make every pupil 'a happy English child' and the denunciations of the system by Patrick Pearse in The Murder Machine, which applied equally at primary and secondary levels, would tend to indicate the direction that reforms would take when independence was achieved. In technical education from the utilitarian point of view, although a sound system, non-denominational in character and with local democratic control, had been developed since 1900 and had made considerable progress, nevertheless:

The high hopes entertained at the turn of the century for the impact which technical education would have on



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industrial and economic development were scarcely realised.(17)

The disappointment was due partly to the fact that, with the exception of the area around Belfast, the industrialisation which technical education was expected to attract did not occur, and also to the attitude of the Irish people to the form that technical education took. T. K. Whitaker, writing of the early rural vocational schools in his document, Economic Development, summarised this attitude as follows:

Education of whatever type, is regarded by all parents as a means of advancing their children, both socially and economically. A school which merely prepared girls for household work and boys for farming (one of the lowest income groups as the Farm Surveys have shown) would never succeed ....(18)

With the setting up of the Irish Free State some initiatives were taken which were designed to align the programmes of primary and secondary schools with the national aim of promoting Gaelic culture and the Irish language in particular. Two national programme conferences were held to this primary end and their reports, submitted in 1922 and 1926 respectively, were accepted by the Government. A commission on secondary education was set up by Dail Eireann in 1921, 'to draft a programme which would meet the national requirements, while allotting its due place to the Irish language'. Its report, submitted in 1922, was never published but a number of its recommendations became the basis for the secondary school programme introduced in August, 1924. In June, 1924, the Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act replaced the existing examination system with the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. As these reforms were limited to school curricula and examinations, it could be said that the first major review of education in the Free State was that undertaken by the Commission on Technical Education, 1926-27. That a reform of technical education should be tackled first was probably due to a number of factors. Firstly, it was recognised that the existing system had many defects and was not fulfilling the functions for which it was set up. Secondly, the plans for self-sufficiency and industrialisation would create demands for a skilled workforce and thirdly, there was pressure from the local technical instruction committees, through the Irish Technical Instruction Association, to reorganise the apprenticeship system. In addition, the new Government, beset with many difficulties, felt freer to review the non-denominational technical sector than risk the possibility of controversies with the Churches in attempting to reform the denominational primary and secondary systems.(20)

**The Commission's Report:**

The layout of the Report followed closely the lines suggested by the Minister in his letter to the Chairman. There were chapters on the historical background to technical education in Ireland and on a survey of the facilities for such education which existed in 1926. The relationship between primary education and technical education was considered as was continuation education. Three chapters were devoted to a study of technical education in relation to employment, apprentice committees and technical education as applicable to specific trades and occupations. Higher technical education was covered as were the particular problems of the Gaeltacht. Control, administration and finance were dealt with under two headings, local and central. Two chapters were devoted to the training of teachers, and to their salaries and conditions of service. Recommendations were interspersed throughout the various chapters as particular issues were discussed, but there was also a chapter summarising the principal recommendations and conclusions. There were eleven appendices, six of which consisted of statistical information, two gave details of apprenticeships and the Apprenticeship Act, 1922, in the Union of South Africa, two already mentioned dealt with technical education systems in Sweden and Switzerland, and finally, there was a list of witnesses who appeared before the Commission and of organisations and individuals who provided written submissions and other data. Minutes of the evidence heard by the Commission were compiled and these are available in typescript, bound in Volumes 1 - 89, in the National Library.

In tracing the history of technical education in Ireland from the establishment, by the Dublin Society, of the Metropolitan School of Art in 1749, through the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, to the co-ordination of the three strands in education, primary, secondary and technical, achieved by the Ministers and Secretaries Act in 1924, the Report outlined the case for further co-ordination as follows:

The current tendency in all modern industrial countries is to make the technical schools fulfil a more definite function in the training for industry. With the establishment of the Department of Industry and Commerce under the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924, there is an opportunity for close association between it and the Technical Instruction Branch of the Department of Education to secure that no industry, actual or potential, is likely to suffer from lack of a supply of trained workers. (21)

In its survey of existing facilities for technical education, the Commission reported that in the year ended 31st. July 1925, there were sixty-five technical schools in operation in which the average enrolment, excluding the large schools in

Dublin and Cork, was two hundred and forty. Instruction was mainly by evening classes, for two hours on two or three evenings per week, at which attendance was voluntary. Even this level of attendance was particularly difficult to achieve especially for students at work during the day. Links between the workshops, factory or business and the technical schools were haphazard and there was a lack of appreciation by employers of the importance of technical education to industrial progress. However, the Commission reported that the evidence submitted to it by employer and employee organisations indicated:

an awakened interest in technical education and a desire to co-operate heartily in securing a close connection between education and industry.(22)

The facts deduced from the following table (Table 1) were of major concern to the Commission, showing as it does, that out of a total of 21,808 students enrolled in technical schools only 4,766, or 23%, were in classes of a trade or technological character, while 64% were taking commerce or domestic economy. Such a distribution did not augur well for a policy of industrialisation.

Table 1.

Group	Number of Students	Percentage
Introductory	1,757	8%
Commerce & Languages	8,811	40%
Science	3,757	18%
Handicraft	1,009	5%
Domestic Economy	5,354	24%
Art	916	4%
Other Subjects	204	1%
Totals	21,808	100%

Source: Report: Department of Education for 1924/25.

The Commission concluded that the work of the schools 'bears too little relation to the local requirements of trade and industry and that a general change of outlook is required'.(23) Attendance at evening classes, being voluntary, was very irregular, particularly during the summer months, and it was clear that any system of technical education which relied on voluntary attendance at evening classes, especially for those in employment, had difficulties. In the record of evidence taken by the Commission, Mr. Sam Bradley, Free State Organiser,

Amalgamated Engineering Union, outlined his Union's position on evening classes for apprentices as follows:

..... the view has been formed by the Union that for a boy to attend evening classes only, it dulls him somehow. You do not get the same response from a boy through evening classes, and it is only natural for a boy to desire some leisure and to have some hobbies of his own that he wishes to indulge in. (24)

He advocated that apprentices should be allowed off on two afternoons per week to attend classes.

Another problem identified by the Commission was the low standard of general education of many of the young persons in employment who enrolled for technical classes. Evidence was given that in some areas there was difficulty in retaining pupils in primary education after they had reached the age of twelve years. Attempts to correct this deficiency were made by means of introductory classes but the composition of these often included apprentices, boy messengers and labourers and boys and girls who had just left the primary school. The results of these mixed classes, which were alien to the concept of technical education, were often disappointing. It was expected, however, that the operation of the School Attendance Act, 1926, would improve the position. The Day Trades Preparatory schools, which were intended to provide instruction for boys prior to their taking up apprenticeships, were not successful and, in fact after the Treaty, their number fell from thirteen to ten, with none at all in Dublin, which had the highest concentration of skilled trades in the country. The Commission found:

There is no definite link between the trades preparatory school and apprenticeship, except in a few isolated cases where employers give preference to boys who are trained thereat. (25)

The estimate was that only 50% of students who had attended these courses got apprenticeships. Difficulties were also experienced in getting teachers 'who are sufficiently qualified and who are able to give to their instruction the trade "atmosphere" that appeals more particularly to the apprentice student'. (26)

The Commission devoted a section in its Report to the Day Apprentice School - the only one in the country - conducted at Bolton Street by the City of Dublin Technical Instruction Committee. The courses here, which covered eight trades for boys and two for girls, were full-time day courses of two years' duration during which time the pupil was virtually an apprentice and, when placed with an employer, entered the trade

as a third year apprentice. Efforts were made, through liaison with employer and trade union organisations to ensure that entry to the courses, normally through scholarships awarded on the results of an entrance examination, was controlled so that all apprentices could be placed in employment. The annual output of this school was fifty boys and fifty girls. Apart from the involvement of trade unions and employer organisations in this scheme, which may have influenced the Commission in relation to apprentice committees, what is also interesting is that the students on these course in their first two years must have been taught some elements, at least, of the 'practice' of their trades which was ultra vires in relation to the definition of 'technical education' in the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899. It should be noted, also, that one of the recommendations of the Commission (Number 65) was:

We recommend also the repeal of the definition of Technical Instruction as contained in the Acts of 1889 and 1899 and the substitution therefor of a more general definition which will permit of instruction in the practice as well as in the principles of any trade. (27)

There was one other apprentice training school in the Dublin area, The Dun Emer Guild, which was privately managed but which was assisted by a grant from the Department of Education. This Guild originated as the Dun Emer Industries set up in Churchtown, Co. Dublin, in 1902, by Susan and Elizabeth Yeats, sisters of the poet W. B. Yeats, in collaboration with Evelyn Gleeson, to provide an outlet for the work of Irish girls. It was engaged in the production of coverings, carpets, rugs and embroidery, and operated a printing press.(28)

In its summary of existing facilities, the Report makes two important observations. Firstly, referring to the balance of output nationally as between commercially and industrially oriented courses, viz. 1200 and 300 students respectively, the Report states:

No one who is interested in Technical Education can regard the figures for the industrial side with a sense of satisfaction. Only 250 - 300 young people are prepared annually in day vocational or semi-vocational schools for employment in industrial life and this in a country of 3,000,000 inhabitants.(29)

The other observation related to the quality and focus of the work being done in evening classes in the technical schools and is as follows:

Much of the instruction is non-technical in character and the existence of low-grade instruction, such as that needed for introductory courses, tends to diminish the

value of the work as a whole. The technical school is not sufficiently in touch with industry and is not fulfilling its main function of providing specialised training for those already in employment.(30)

In evidence, an inspector in the Technical Instruction Branch, Department of Education, Mr Peadar MacCionnaith, gave details of the training of apprentices in the Naval Dockyard in Haulbowline Dockyard and the linkage which existed with the local technical school. He stated:

It was the school manager who had charge of the work the apprentices were to do in this dockyard. He arranged the time that the boys should spend on theoretical work as well as the time they should give to practical work.(31)

According to Mr. MacCionnaith, the boys were paid by the Government, but it was the school manager 'who was to say what the boys were to be paid'. The inspector also suggested to the Commission that the majority of secondary schools run by the Christian Brothers should become vocational schools with a close bond between them and industrial work. He even went so far as to suggest that once the pupils had reached the age of fifteen years in these schools they should operate on the basis of a forty-four hour week as it would 'turn them towards the industrial side at once'.

#### **Relationship of Primary to Technical Education:**

In reviewing primary education and its relationship to technical education, the Commission was made aware of the problems in technical schools with students whose primary education was defective, and employers, in evidence, indicated that similiar difficulties arose in the job situation. In some cases, children left as early as ten and a half years of age and many could barely read and write. It was expected, however, that the School Attendance Act, 1926, would raise standards, the criterion being that a sound primary education was an essential pre-requisite to the success of any scheme of technical education. The first recommendation of the Commission was that:

all sixth standard pupils should be tested in an examination, which should be supervised and authorised by the Department, and that success in this examination should entitle the candidate to the award of a school-leaving certificate.(30)

The re-instatement of drawing - 'virtually the language of the skilled tradesman and craftsman' - as an obligatory subject in primary schools was also proposed. The Report commented that the existing official school week of twenty hours was the

lowest of eight countries examined. The Commission was of the opinion that pupils of fourteen years of age were not sufficiently mature to go directly into employment and that sixteen years would be a more appropriate age, but did not think that the economic conditions of the country could allow such a postponement.

#### Continuation Courses:

It recommended, therefore, that full time continuation courses of two years duration should be provided for those who had left school at fourteen and had not gone into employment, 'to obtain an education with sufficient practical bias to help correct the dislike for industrial work', which was a characteristic of pupils leaving the primary and secondary schools. The programmes to be followed in these continuation courses should be distinct from those provided in technical schools, to which the minimum age of attendance should then be set at sixteen years. Different courses should be provided for urban areas and rural areas, the urban ones being full-time for those not at work and part-time for those at work, while the rural courses should be part-time only. An interesting suggestion made by the Commission was that on these courses, 'The teaching should be on the lines suited to adults rather than to school children'.(33) The Commission was quite adamant in its recommendation (Number 18) in this case:

A proper system of continuation education is of vital importance to the social and economic welfare of the people and its organisation must be undertaken without delay.(34)

The intention was that attendance at whole-time continuation courses should be compulsory for those between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years, who were not attending either primary or secondary school and who were not at work. Exemption from the requirement to attend would only be granted to those who were engaged in 'appropriate employment'. Those who were in employment in the same age group, and this would include apprentices, should be required to attend part-time classes for a minimum of one hundred and eighty hours in each year - this figure was derived from the Swedish Education Act, 1918. The idea of compulsory attendance was in accordance with the views on juvenile unemployment and the problems of youth idleness which were outlined to the Commission by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and the Advisory Committees for Juvenile Employment in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.(35)

It was hoped, therefore, that the combined effects of the School Attendance Act, the institution of the primary school

leaving certificate, the re-introduction of drawing as a compulsory subject at elementary level and the introduction of the continuation courses and classes would resolve a number of problems of the existing technical education system and would also alleviate juvenile unemployment and its associated ills. Early school-leaving would end, the quality of primary education would be improved and, with drawing included, would provide a better basis for technical education. The wasteful introductory or preparatory courses in technical schools could be abolished; the demand for commercial and domestic economy courses could be catered for in a non-technical environment and all young persons, whether at work or unemployed, would receive education up to the age of sixteen years. The technical school, which would then only accept pupils over sixteen years, better educated, more mature and more career orientated, could undertake its real role in scientific, technical and industrial development. This was summed up in the Report as follows:

The success of a technical course or class depends on the extent to which it deals with young people in employment between sixteen and twenty years and not those of continuation school years.(36)

### 3. Apprenticeship

From some of the evidence given to the Commission by employer representatives, the National Executive of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, and the Department of Industry and Commerce, it was clear, according to the Report:

that the system of apprenticeship entailing a voluntary arrangement under which the employer, the youthful worker and the guardian of the worker fulfilled certain obligations, has ceased to be effective and at present there exists no guarantee either for the efficient technical training of the apprentice or for employment after apprenticeship.(37)

In its submission to the Commission, the Electrical Trades Union was more graphic and colourful in its assesment of the position in the electrical industry. It quoted a letter from a parent, who had obviously paid a premium to an employer to have his son trained as an electrician, which included the following:

My son served (or wasted) his time in a shop which has become notorious for the number of boys employed. During most of his time, he played cards in a cellar and is now an expert at pontoon etc. .... little interest was taken in the boy and I might as well have thrown my money into the Liffey.(38)



It was apparent to all that the apprenticeship system had not adjusted to the situation brought about by rapid changes in industrial methods and that the training of apprentices, either in respect of the methods employed or the time taken, bore little relationship to contemporary requirements. It was also beginning to be realised that, not only was the training of young persons in skilled trades important, but there was the need to ensure that industry had sufficient competent workers, not only to meet its existing demands, but also to permit development, and in addition, to ensure that competent workers would get employment. It was also recognised that the best advice to help solve these problems came from industry itself, both employers and workers. The era of manpower policy and manpower planning and the involvement of the 'social partners', - Government, employers and workers - was beginning to dawn.

Some indication of the nature of the problem can be got from the figures supplied to the Commission by the Department of Industry and Commerce. In the period 1923 to 1926, the number of skilled workers in the State had fallen from 12,146 to 10,193, a fall of 16% in a four year period, and the decline was even greater in the case of apprentices as many employers were not taking their quota. This can be verified from the estimates contained in the following table (Table 2) in relation to skilled men and apprentices, specifically in the building industry, in Dublin and in the State, for the year 1926.

Table 2.

Trades	Dublin		Saorstát	
	Est. No. Of		Est. No. Of	
	Skilled Men.	Apps.	Skilled Men.	Apps
Carpenters	1624	153	3967	388
Bricklayers	441	95	643	98
Masons	185	25	1221	37
Slaters	121	3	175	7
Plasterers	239	25	764	57
Plumbers	386	55	570	77
Paint/Decorator	1028	222	1942	297
(Total)	(4006)	(578)	(9282)	(961)

Source: Report Commission on Technical Education. Page 84.

An analysis of these figures shows that the overall ratio of skilled men to apprentices in Dublin was approximately 7:1

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while in the State as a whole it was almost 10:1. In the case of the painters and decorators the normally agreed ratio was a straightforward 3:1. However, in the case of plumbers the formula was more complex:

each employer may have one apprentice up to two men and one for every two men in addition upwards, and one extra when the oldest apprentice is on the last year of his time. The number of men shall be reckoned on a three year average.(39)

This gives an indication of the complexities of one of the issues facing the Commission.

Much of the evidence concerning technical education for skilled trades and occupations centred around the training of apprentices. There was general agreement that the existing system was defective and needed radical overhaul. The Commission reported:

There is general agreement between the employers and the trade unions that the existing scheme does not afford a solution of the large problems involved. They are agreed also that the existing system of apprenticeship as a whole has failed. There is no public control of apprenticeship such as would guarantee effective technical training and employment after apprenticeship, and in addition there is no requirement on employers to take on apprentices.(40)

It no longer made economic sense for an employer to use the services of a skilled and highly-paid worker to train an apprentice and this duty was more and more becoming the function of the technical school. In his evidence to the Commission, Mr. R. J. Scallan, an automobile engineer and an employer, maintained that the old system of apprenticeship was out-of-date and entirely unsuited for modern conditions stating:

If you want a boy to go into a workshops and to impart to him all the rudiments and elements of a skilled trade, a considerable amount of time must be devoted to that work. It can only be imparted by a highly skilled, and, at the present time, a highly-paid workman. I maintain that no employer can afford to allow a highly-paid workman waste his time training that boy.(41)

While there was agreement on many of the problems identified with regard to the recruitment, training and education of apprentices there were serious divergences of opinions as to how these problems were to be tackled. These diverse views existed, not only between employer and employee representatives in particular trades but also between one trade and another. There was fairly general agreement that the standard of

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education of apprentices from the primary schools was defective and that a much better type was coming from the trades preparatory schools. The full-time two year apprentice courses in Bolton Street found favour with employers and trade unions, particularly with the Brick and Stonelayers Trade Union, although there were some reservations in the case of printing apprentices. There was a good deal of support on both sides of industry for an entry age of sixteen years, and for the registration of apprentices. All were agreed that additional compulsory technical education was needed while the apprentice was serving his time. But at what stage in the apprenticeship it should be given, whether it should be imparted through full-time or part-time day courses or through evening classes were areas where there were differing views; the employers normally favouring evening classes outside working hours and the trade unions seeking day-release classes during working hours. There was a good consensus in favour of local apprenticeship committees for each trade with equal representation of employers and employees and an independent chairman. These would exercise general control over registration, intake numbers, ratios and employment after completion of apprenticeship. However, there were some areas, such as the recruitment of apprentices, their age and qualifications at entry, the form of indenture to be used, and the ratios of craftsmen to apprentices on which the Commission felt there would be little general agreement and that such problems would have to be determined at local level between employers and trade unions. There were objections, too, from trade unions to the payment of premiums to employers in respect of apprenticeships as this tended to give rise to inequality in that the apprentice for whom a premium was paid got preferential treatment. A trade union official, in evidence, maintained that 'the premium apprentice' had always been a bone of contention and gave as an example:

Take for instance the railway works in the Free State. Premium apprentices there have the opportunity of going through the drawing office and the different shops, which gives them a full knowledge of the whole trade, when the ordinary apprentice would be put either to fitting or turning or pattern-making.(42)

There was the criticism, too, that the ending of the school year did not always coincide with the period when employment opportunities arose in firms. Many employers considered that apprentices should only be recruited from persons who had completed the two-year preparatory course, and insisted that drawing, science and manual instruction should be part of the curriculum. However, the general view was that practical training was best provided through experience on the job. Employers considered that 'Part-time day classes for apprentices would mean dis-arranging the whole system of work',

while the trade unions favoured release for classes for three hours on two afternoons of the week in the first two years.

The school inspector, who gave evidence to the Commission, summed up the general position of the apprentice at the time as follows:

Under the present apprenticeship system the apprentice seems to be nobody's darling. The employer uses him as he likes, the parents as a general rule simply look upon him as a means of bringing in a couple of shillings a week, and when we want to give him a technical education we add to his misery by making him attend night classes - classes of which he gets tired very soon, and all this, remember, at a time, and at an age when he should not have any night classes to bother him.(43)

Both employers and trade unions, however, favoured technical classes at night in the later years of apprenticeship. Both sides stated that there were difficulties in getting apprentices to attend evening classes in spite of inducements, such as the payment of fees by employers and the award of prizes by trade unions. Another objection raised in relation to apprentices attending whole-time courses in apprentice schools was that:

an apprentice attending a whole-time school remains too long out of touch with actual working conditions, that he becomes pampered in the school and rendered unfit to overcome the hardships and grapple with the difficulties he will afterwards have to face in the workshops and which are not encountered in the school.(44)

Some witnesses, in evidence to the Commission, advocated that, not only should apprentices be required to attend appropriate technical classes, but they should also pass a trade test at the end of their apprenticeship, and it was the view of the Commission that both employers and trade unions should 'co-operate in restricting recognition as a tradesman to those with some defined hallmark of efficiency'.(45)

The question of apprentices from rural areas and from the Gaeltacht was also considered by the Commission, and the difficulties of catering for these on the same basis as urban apprentices were recognised. It was considered that the best way of dealing with this problem was through the award of 'apprentice scholarships'. These, however, would be competitive in character so that not all rural apprentices would be provided for. The Commission summed up the advantages of this approach as follows:

It would be to the general advantage to have the standard of workmanship in the remoter areas raised by the presence

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of occasional journeymen possessing a training equal to that of the town tradesman.(46)

### Some Special Submissions:

The Commission considered in some detail three comprehensive submissions outlining specific apprenticeship schemes which were made to them, one from Sir Henry McLaughlin with the support of the Dublin Master Builders Association, one from the Society of Irish Motor Traders and one from the Dublin Master Printers Association. That supported by the Master Builders envisaged the appointment of a Director of Employment who would regulate entry to all forms of employment, skilled and unskilled. His department would deal with all apprenticeship matters, ratios, intake numbers, etc., requiring all boys seeking apprenticeships to spend two years at a Trades Preparatory School, at the end of which at the age of sixteen years, they would compete for a pre-determined number of State funded apprentice scholarships which would include a maintenance allowance. The scholarship would fund a two-year course in an apprentice training school and, following an examination, the apprentices would be allocated to employers to complete their apprenticeships. There would be a final examination to qualify as a tradesman. The Director of Employment would be assisted by advisory committees of employers, workers, parents and others interested in education (47). Though the scheme as such was not recommended by the Commission, it pre-figured some of the later developments in apprenticeship, such as central control and a professional approach to training.

The Report of the Commission was very critical of the state of technical training in the motor industry and stated:

Yet in few industries is there to be found so great a state of dis-organisation from the point of view of technical training of those engaged therein.(48)

Apprentices were taken on irrespective of their standard of education and employers, in many cases, took little or no interest in the training of the boy, and frequently garages had neither the equipment nor a qualified mechanic to teach him the trade. It was reported that it was very difficult to get a good motor mechanic in the State and on many occasions men had to be specially brought in from England. The scheme put forward by the Society of Irish Motor Traders, included an age, an educational and a physical fitness standard, indentures were to be endorsed by the Society and the educational authorities when the requisite levels of skill and education had been attained. An apprentice committee would be appointed by the Society in co-operation with the educational authorities to deal with the

whole problem of apprenticeship. Finally, arrangements were to be made by the Society that apprenticeship certificates issued under the scheme would, through the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in London, have world-wide recognition. The Commission were only too pleased to give their full approval of the proposed scheme.

In the case of the submission by the printing industry, the Commission were impressed by 'the large measure of agreement' in the views expressed by the Dublin Master Printers Association and the Dublin Typographical Provident Society. Approximately twenty to twenty-five apprentices were taken on in the Dublin area annually for apprenticeships which lasted for seven years. The influence of customers or the fact that applicants were sons of employees were the main recruitment criteria, but they had also begun to recruit from the Bolton Street Day Apprentice School. There was general agreement that a better system of recruiting and training apprentices was required. Both sides advocated that an advisory committee of three members each from the employers and the trade union, chaired by a nominee of the Department of Education, should be formed to deal with all apprenticeship matters in the Dublin area. An entrance test was proposed as well as a probationary period of six months for all apprentices. In evidence to the Commission the following objections to the printing course in the Day Apprentice School were voiced; the pupil got a good general education but not enough trade practice, and the employer could not afford to be entirely without the services of apprentices during their first two years. To correct this situation, a revised attendance schedule for the first five years of apprenticeship was jointly proposed, giving three days at school and three days at work per week in the first and second years, reducing to six hours of day classes and six hours of night classes in the third year and six hours of night classes only in the fourth and fifth years. Because of the nature of the printing trade, literary as well as technical training was important and special training in Irish should be provided. However, there was not unanimity with regard to the training of all printing apprentices in Dublin as the proprietors of the Dublin Newspapers maintained that the printing works was the proper place for training and that voluntary attendance at night classes should suffice. The problem of forming viable classes for printing apprentices out side Dublin and Cork was recognised and it was felt that this would be best overcome by a system of apprentice scholarships. As with the Society of Irish Motor Traders, the Commission recommended the adoption of the scheme as proposed.

#### **Foreign Apprenticeship Systems:**

The Commission noted the existence of socio-economic legislation regulating apprenticeship in many foreign

countries, the objective of which was two-fold: at the level of the individual, to provide for the proper training of young people to enable them to have more satisfying careers, and at the level of the national economy, to increase the productivity of the State through better training of workers. It noted also that this legislation, in many cases, provided for the setting up of representative committees to deal with all aspects of apprenticeship training. The legislation often provided for the designation of trades, entry to which had to be in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations in relation to age and educational qualifications; for educational release and training programmes; for formal indentures and tests of competence on completion of apprenticeship. In certain countries, also, there were laws which required employers to employ and to continue to employ a specified number of apprentices. The Commission undertook a detailed study of two particular pieces of legislation in this regard: the Apprenticeship Act, 1922, of the Union of South Africa and an Act of 1924 in Queensland, Australia, setting up an Apprenticeship Executive. Both of these Acts provided for the designation or scheduling of trades, for the establishment of advisory committees and the making, in consultation with these committees, of comprehensive statutory rules and regulations covering all aspects of apprenticeship. Appendix 8, pages 174 to 186, of the Report gives the complete text as well as the relevant Schedules of the Apprenticeship Act, 1922, of the Union of South Africa, which is a most comprehensive document.

#### **Recommendations in Relation to Apprenticeship:**

Having studied the evidence presented to it and recognising that the problems of apprenticeship involved not only technical education but also general educational, social and economic considerations, and that it concerned young persons, their parents, educationalists, employers and employees both as individuals and as associations, the Commission faced the task of making recommendations. The Commissioners were no doubt mindful of the advice of the Minister, in his initial letter to the Chairman (49), to the effect that trade union and employer co-operation was needed for any new scheme to succeed. The approach adopted seemed to be that where there was consensus or near-consensus to make firm recommendations, and where there was likely to be disagreement, or where expert technical knowledge was needed, as for example, in relation to the curricula for particular trades, to leave such matters to be decided at local level by an advisory committee such as had been proposed by the Society of Irish Motor Traders, the Dublin Master Printers and the Dublin Typographical Society as well as many others. After all, there had been general agreement on the need for local apprenticeship advisory committees, and where they had been instituted, as in the case of the Dublin Day Apprentice School in Bolton Street, they had worked well. They

had given both employers and trade unions that measure of control they felt they needed, including that relating to teaching the 'practice' of a trade. The Commission summed up its views on these committees as follows:

The apprentice committees should be appointed by the State and should consist of equal numbers of representatives of employers and workers chosen in consultation with the organisations of employers and of workers and should have an independent Chairman. In addition each committee should have as members Officers of the Department of Education and of the Department of Industry and Commerce,(50)

The involvement of these two Departments, one of which was responsible for the education of the worker and the other for the development of industry was seen as 'the means of ensuring that no industry suffers from a shortage of trained workers'. The Commission also made the following point:

A joint body constituted on the lines referred to is the only body on whom it is possible to place the burden of solving the problems connected with the education of workers for any special trade or industry.(51)

**The recommendations of the Commission in relation to apprenticeship were as follows:**

in a centre where the requisite educational facilities are available an apprentice should not be engaged until he has reached the standard of proficiency that should be attained by the completion of a course at a whole-time continuation school of a practical character.

(Recommendation 24)

in rural areas where prospective apprentice candidates would not have the opportunity of attending whole-time continuation courses through lack of local facilities some existing primary to secondary scholarships should be made tenable in continuation schools with a trade base.(Recommendation 25)

attendance at technical schools should be made compulsory in the first two years of apprenticeship in trades designated under the terms of a proposed apprenticeship Act, where appropriate facilities were available.(Recommendation 26)

this compulsory attendance should be by day-time classes, part-time or whole-time, as advised by local apprenticeship committees, and that attendance should be for not less than 180 hours duration in each of the first two years of apprenticeship.(Recommendation 27)



for apprentices in their third and subsequent years technical education should be conducted by night classes which will be compulsory or optional as each trade decides and this instruction should extend for two years at least. (Recommendation 28)

appropriate technical examinations should be held annually and candidates should be eligible for the award of elementary and advanced certificates. The examinations would be based on syllabuses in respect of each trade and devised in consultation with its apprentice committee and conducted by the Department of Education, and in the case of the practical examination, the Department's examiner should be assisted by a representative employer and a representative tradesman. (Recommendation 29)

apprentice scholarships, awarded through competition and of sufficient value, should be available to rural apprentices to enable them to take a full year's course at a centre which had suitable facilities. (Recommendation 30)

legislation on the lines of the South African and Queensland Apprenticeship Acts was the best method of dealing with the problem of industrial training in the Saorstát: the legislation should provide for the scheduling of trades, the registration of apprentices and the appointment of statutory committees for each trade or group of trades to advise on all matters relating to apprenticeship, industrial training and the means of entry to industry; that the functions of a committee should include advice on such matters as the proportion of juveniles to adults, the length of the period of apprenticeship or learnership, the prescribed form of indenture, the age of entry, the standard of education on entry, the opportunities in the workshops or factory for learning a trade, the arrangements for attendance at technical classes and the special type of education that would appear to be most suitable. (Recommendation 39)

apprentice committees should be appointed by the State and should consist of equal numbers of representatives of employers and workers chosen in consultation with organisations of employers and of workers and should have an independent Chairman. In addition each committee should have as members officers of the Department of Education and of the Department of Industry and Commerce. (Recommendation 40)

the proposals put forward by the Society of Irish Motor Traders for the training of motor trade apprentices should be adopted. (Recommendation 44)

the proposals put forward by the Dublin Master Printer's Association and the Dublin Typographical Provident Society for the training of printing trade apprentices in Dublin should be adopted. (Recommendation 45)

teachers who have to deal primarily with the technique of any trade or craft should be fully qualified tradesmen and should be trained for teaching by intensive courses at the Central Technical School, Dublin or the Metropolitan School of Art. (Recommendation 80)

### **Recommendations in Non-Apprenticeship Areas:**

The Commission made recommendations concerning what could be called 'non-trade' occupations such as hotel and restaurant work, the training of chefs and waitresses, the fishing industry, the mercantile marine and the training of nurses. Recommendations were also made in relation to the training of teachers, especially those for the proposed continuation courses and those for trade apprentices. It recommended that the City of Dublin Technical School at Bolton Street should function as a central technical institute at which trade and apprentice classes which were dispersed in Dublin and the adjoining towns should be concentrated. In relation to higher education, it recommended that existing schemes in Dublin, Cork and Limerick should be extended to provide three-year courses of a secondary technical nature with a strong technological character and a similar development was proposed in the commercial areas for Rathmines College, Dublin and in Cork. The re-establishment of the Advisory Board for Technical Education was suggested.

From the administrative point of view, the technical instruction schemes were left in the control of the local statutory committees as set up under the Technical Instruction Act, 1899. Vocational education committees (VECs), however, replaced the technical instruction committees and where there were joint committees serving both agriculture and technical instruction, these functions were separated. Vocational education committees were smaller and more representative in their composition, and each had a chief executive officer responsible for the planning, implementation and control of schemes proposed by the committees and approved by the Department. Budgetary provision, and consequently planning, was to be made more secure as compulsory rates of 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ .d. in the pound in county areas and 3.d. in the pound in urban areas were to be levied. (52)

**Outcome:**

The outcome of the Report and Recommendations of the Ingram Commission was the promulgation of two Acts of the Oireachtas, the Vocational Education Act, 1930, which was to provide the framework for the subsequent successful developments in technical and technological education in Ireland, and the Apprenticeship Act, 1931, which, although it put apprenticeship on the statute books and was to lead to further apprenticeship legislation, was in itself largely a failure, although there were some good apprenticeship schemes developed and the numbers of apprentices attending technical schools increased considerably.

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- (43) Ibid., Minutes of Evidence Heard, 27/10/1926, Typescript No.4.
- (44) Report of the Commission on Technical Education, op. cit., p.61.
- (45) Ibid., pp.62,63.
- (46) Ibid., p.63.
- (47) Ibid., p.87.
- (48) Ibid., p.93.
- (49) Ibid., pp.viii to ix.
- (50) Ibid., p.79.
- (51) Ibid., p.79.
- (52) Coolahan, op. cit., p.97.

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## Chapter Seven

### THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT 1930

and

### THE APPRENTICESHIP ACT 1931

#### 1. Political, Social and Economic Overview, 1930-1960

##### **Political Affairs:**

The outcome of the Commission on Technical Education was the preparation by the Government of two new Bills, one dealing with vocational education and the other with apprenticeship. The first of these, the Vocational Education Bill, was introduced in the Dail by the Minister for Education, Professor J. M. O'Sullivan, on the 10th. April, 1930. The original intention was that the Apprenticeship Bill would be considered by the Oireachtas in tandem with the Vocational Education Bill, but, as will be seen, it was delayed at the drafting stage and was not introduced until 30th. June that year by the Minister for Industry and Commerce. These measures were the last to be enacted in the area of vocational education and training for almost three decades, as education virtually disappeared from the legislative agenda.

As the Bills were being debated in Dail Eireann and passed into law, the country was on the brink of major new developments which changed the political, social and economic context in which the new measures became operative. The catalyst for these developments was the coming to power, in

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1932, of the Fianna Fail party under Eamonn De Valera - the first change in the political party forming the government since the foundation of the state, and in Mr. De Valera's own words, 'a seismic event' in the eyes of his opponents.(1) In the event, the smooth transition of power testified to the soundness of the democratic foundations laid by Cumann na nGael, and, by his subsequent actions, De Valera established himself as 'a guarantor of social and political stability',(2) even winning an acknowledgment from the Protestant, Unionist oriented The Irish Times that his government 'had acted fairly and uprightly towards political and religious minorities'.(3) As a result, though political rivalry remained intense and bitter, fears of a breakdown of the political process evaporated. De Valera remained the dominant figure in Irish politics until his election to the Presidency in 1959, and Fianna Fail was in power throughout that period, except for two short periods, 1948-51 and 1954-57, when inter-party governments led by Fine Gael took over.

Before the end of the thirties Ireland's political relationship with Britain had been redefined. Changes brought about by a piecemeal dismantling of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922, were embodied in a new constitution in 1937, and consolidated by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1938. Ireland's status had evolved from that of a Dominion within the British Commonwealth to that of a sovereign, independent state with an external link with the Commonwealth - a republic in all but name. The process was completed when Ireland was formally proclaimed a republic in 1949 and the last link with the Commonwealth was broken. Westminster responded with the Ireland Act, in June 1949, copper fastening the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.



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**Social Affairs:**

In the areas of social and economic affairs major changes were also taking place, as the policies of the preceding decade, from 1920-1930, were reversed. It was a time of deep depression with high unemployment and widespread poverty. Fianna Fail had a genuine commitment to social reform and, though unemployment and emigration continued to be serious problems until the end of the fifties, a series of measures alleviated the condition of the poor. These measures introduced pensions for widows and orphans and unemployment benefit for the uninsured. Old age pensions were increased and a state-aided housing programme undertaken. Major advances were made in the area of health, although this was also the issue of greatest controversy. The health services were consolidated under a single responsible minister and access to them for those who could not afford to pay was greatly improved. The controversy arose when the Minister for Health in the inter-party Government of 1948-51, Dr. Noel Browne, sought to introduce a scheme for free medical services for mothers and for children up to sixteen years of age. The Mother and Child scheme drew the fire of the medical profession and, more crucially, of the Catholic Hierarchy. The controversy led to the resignation of the Minister and helped to bring down the Government. The scheme was largely salvaged in a subsequent Act - though it was found expedient to include a modest means test to dampen the episcopal opposition.

**Economic and Industrial Affairs:**

Fianna Fail's advent to power in 1932, brought about a reversal of Cumann na nGael's economic policy of laissez-faire. Fianna Fail was ideologically committed to the Sinn Fein policy of self-sufficiency. This was to be achieved through 'balanced growth based on protection for industry and a shift from

livestock to tillage in agriculture'.(4) The agricultural policy was not a success. The perceived relationship between tillage and increased employment proved mistaken, and the cattle trade was seriously disrupted by the Economic War which began in 1932, when De Valera withheld the land annuities due to the British Government under the terms of the Land Acts. It continued until 1938, when it was ended by the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement. This removed restrictions on Irish agricultural imports to Britain in return for some preferential treatment for British industrial exports to Ireland.

Fianna Fail's industrial policy, on the other hand, resulted in a substantial increase in employment between 1931 and 1938. This was achieved in spite of a very unfavourable climate for industrial development because of the international Depression, and in the teeth of the public derision of professional economists and the distaste of many civil servants.(5) There was also continuous and determined opposition from the Department of Finance. The industrialisation programme was spear-headed by Sean Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce. The Control of Manufactures Acts, 1932-34, sought to ensure that industries established behind soaring tariff barriers remained under Irish control. The Industrial Credit Corporation was set up, in 1933, to provide financial support for industry. A number of other state bodies including the Irish Sugar Company(1933), Aer Lingus(1936) and Bord na Mona(1946) were founded. Policy making was hampered by the scarcity of relevant statistics and 'a lack of authoritative reports relative to economic matters' so that the policy of self reliance 'found itself obliged to depend more heavily than anticipated on intellectual self reliance'.(6)

The war years created problems for industry because of its heavy dependence on imported raw materials. To ease the situation Irish Shipping was set up in 1941. A problem of a

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different kind manifested itself in 1942, when the Department of Industry and Commerce proposed that there should be a restriction imposed on the emigration of key workers to Britain. F.H.Boland, Assistant Secretary of External Affairs, suggested that the best means of dealing with the problem would be 'an efficient central organisation' which would ensure that manpower demands were met. This prompted Lemass to put forward his own solution which contained the idea of a manpower policy with the establishment of a Ministry of Labour as a labour planning agency. The proposals met with strong opposition from other Government departments and came to nothing.

After the war a number of developments took place which helped to shape the modern industrial scene. In August 1946, the Labour Court was established under the Industrial Relations Act to provide a forum for the settlement of labour disputes. The main problem was to foster growth and the emphasis was increasingly on efficiency. Lemass produced a scheme which provided for 'development councils' within industry, whose functions would include the promotion of scientific and market research, the study of methods of production, the management and use of labour, the extension of facilities for the technical training of workers and improvements in the design and standardisation of products. The Bill was introduced in the Dail in July, 1947, but lapsed when the Government fell the following year. Nevertheless, it contained the embryo of some initiatives which would come to fruition in later years. It appeared from newspaper comment at the time that the public grasp of the requirements for economic development was inadequate.(7)

An important innovation, in 1949, was the setting up of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA): 'to investigate the effects of protective measures'; 'to initiate proposals and schemes for the development of Irish industry'; and 'to advise

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on the measures necessary for the expansion and modernisation of existing industry'. It met with vigorous opposition from the Departments of Finance and of Industry and Commerce. Finance tried to insist that it should have a purely advisory role and proclaimed that the result of its creation would be that private industry would cream off the profitable enterprises and 'the state would be left with the duds'. In spite of the hostility, the IDA survived to become a major and largely independent body in the area of industrial development.(8)

Meantime, the economic situation remained gloomy and by the mid-fifties there was a mood of deepening despair. The tide began to turn in the last years of the decade, however, with the setting up of the Institute of Public Administration, in 1957, to improve the efficiency of the public service, and with the production of a seminal study of economic progress, 'Economic Development', by T.K.Whitaker, Secretary, Department of Finance, in 1958. 'Economic Development' became the basis for the White Paper, 'Programme for Economic Expansion', published in November 1958, which marked a historic new departure in Irish economic policy signalling a shift from protection towards free trade, and the encouragement of foreign investment in Ireland. The era of the planned economy had arrived. By this time, even wider horizons were in view as Ireland prepared to apply for membership of the European Economic Community.

Throughout those three decades of change and development the Acts regulating vocational education and apprenticeship, the Vocational Education, 1930 and the Apprenticeship Act, 1931 were implemented, with markedly different degrees of success.

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## 2. Preparation of the Bills

### Background:

As the Commission on Technical Education, 1927, had been appointed by and had reported to the Minister for Education, it was a matter for that Minister to examine the Report and to decide what action should be taken. Most of the recommendations would appear to have been acceptable to the Department, except number 18. This recommended the making of attendance at the proposed new continuation classes compulsory, either on a whole-time or a part-time basis, for certain categories of young persons in urban or rural areas, whether in approved employment or not.(9) Referring to this in the Dail when the Vocational Education Bill was being debated, the Minister said that, while he was of the opinion that the measure was desirable, there would be considerable difficulties in implementing it, and added 'that no policing system that we could afford would be able to enforce an Act of that kind'.(10) When the Vocational Education Bill was in its initial drafting stage the intention seemed to be that the recommendations of the Commission in relation to education and to apprenticeship would be included in the one Bill. This initial draft, which was submitted to the Department of Finance for its comments on 10 May 1929, was entitled:

An Act to amend the Law relating to Technical Education; to establish Local Committees for Vocational Education; to Regulate Attendance and Employment of young persons and for purposes in connection therewith.(11)

Part 5 of this draft, under the heading Technical Education, contained nine sections, numbered 35 to 43, dealing with apprenticeship. These covered such matters as the designation of trades, apprenticeship committees and the powers and duties

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of the Minister for Education in relation to these committees, the duties of VECs and employers, arrangements for compulsory attendance of apprentices at educational courses and provision for penalties for non-compliance. In the Draft, also, the term 'apprentice' was defined as follows:

the expression 'apprentice' shall mean a minor of at least fourteen years of age who enters into a contract of service whereby he is to receive from or through his employer instruction in any industry, trade, craft or business.(12)

This definition approximates very closely to the traditional concept of the craft apprentice, retaining the contract of service aspect as well as the requirement on the part of the employer to provide the necessary instruction. On the other hand, the definition in the Heads of the later Apprenticeship Bill was more appropriate to the employment of a young person without the obligation to provide instruction or training. It was broader in concept, provided for both sexes and introduced the category of 'learner' which had resulted from the application to certain trades of the Trades Boards Acts of 1909 and 1918. The definition in the draft Apprenticeship Bill was as follows:

Apprentice or learner shall mean a boy or girl between the ages of 14 and 18 who enters into a contract of service express or implied to be employed in any trade to which this Act has been applied.(13)

It would appear, therefore, that the original intention in the apprenticeship provisions in the Vocational Education Bill was to preserve the traditional apprenticeship concept with provision for training and education. On the other hand, the intention in the Apprenticeship Bill, drafted by the Department

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for Industry and Commerce, could be regarded as a provision for regulating the employment of young workers. In the event, neither Act as passed by the Oireachtas contained a specific definition of the term 'apprentice'. In fact, other than a reference to apprenticeship committees the term does not appear at all in the Vocational Education Act. The reasons for these omissions may have been that the State was reluctant to provide a definition of those who were to be regarded in law as apprentices and then find itself unable to fulfil its legal commitments under the Act to all who would qualify. Alternatively, it may have anticipated controversy between employers and trade unions in the matter and, consequently, left the issue to be decided by apprenticeship committees which, when they were designating particular trades and districts, would decide who were to be regarded as apprentices. Draft A of this Act also provided that agriculture and other rural industries were not to be regarded as 'industrial pursuits' unless in circumstances approved by the Minister for Education, in consultation with the Minister for Agriculture. Included in this first draft of the Bill, however, was provision for the implementation of the rule of compulsory attendance at continuation classes of young persons between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, which was later withdrawn by the Minister on the grounds that it would be impossible to implement and police it. It was drafted as follows:

The Minister may by order make regulations for prohibiting the employment of young persons (i.e. 14 to 16 years) at such times or in such a manner as to prevent or interfere with their attendance at continuation school.(14)

The Minister's comment on this was that it would not be economically feasible to prevent young people at the age of fourteen from taking up employment. There was also provision in the draft Bill for the imposition of fines, not

only on parents and employers, but also on young persons in employment where prescribed classes were not attended.

The definition of a Day Technical College contained a proviso 'that it shall not provide expressly for training in the technique of a trade or craft' which would appear to be a carry-over from similiar restrictions, already discussed, in the 1889 and 1899 Acts.(15) Among the powers and functions of the proposed apprenticeship committees provided for in Draft A of the Bill, put forward by the Department of Education, was the following in relation to a certificate of competence on completion of apprenticeship:

to report to the Minister in regard to the examinations, if any, which should be passed by apprentices during their period of training and the granting of certificates of vocational competence.(16)

**Initial Draft Joint Bill:**

Sections 35 to 43 of Draft A of the Bill, dealing specifically with apprenticeship matters, proposed quite comprehensive powers for the Minister, and it was apparent, at this stage at any rate in the drafting of the proposed legislation, that the Department of Education envisaged one Act covering vocational education and apprenticeship, both of which would come under its control in an integrated way. However, this was not to be. A study of the files of the Department of Finance reveals that the draft of the Vocational Education Bill containing the apprenticeship clauses was submitted by the Department of Education for the consideration of the Minister for Finance, with a covering letter dated 10 May, 1929. In a minute dated 26 July, 1929, the Department of Finance replied that the Minister (for Finance) 'would be glad to be informed whether in their



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present form (the proposals) have received the consideration and approval of the Departments of Industry and Commerce and of Local Government and Public Health'. In reply to this enquiry copies of communications received by the Department of Education from the Departments referred to were sent to the Department of Finance, with a minute dated 30 July, 1929, which stated inter alia:

It will be observed from the correspondence that the Department of Industry and Commerce has submitted draft proposals for legislation on Apprenticeship. In these circumstances it will no longer be necessary for this Department to retain the sections in Part 5 of the Vocational Education Bill dealing with this problem. It will, however, be necessary for the Minister for Education to take powers to impose on Vocational Education Committees the obligation of providing for the educational training of apprentices referred to in paragraph (e) of Section 4 of the Apprenticeship Bill.(17)

A copy of the draft Apprenticeship Bill was also enclosed as well as a copy of the accompanying letter from the Department of Industry and Commerce which described it as 'a rough draft, for the establishment of Apprenticeship Committees to deal with questions pertaining to apprenticeships in certain trades'. It should be seen not as the final views of the Department of Industry and Commerce, but as 'indicating generally the lines on which the Minister may be prepared to introduce legislation'. This letter, dated 9 July 1929, also stated that the Minister for Industry and Commerce 'will be glad to avail of the suggestion that the draft proposals for the Vocational Education Bill and for the Apprenticeship Bill ... should be sent simultaneously to the Parliamentary Draftsman'.

So it was, that what initially was intended to be one Act dealing with vocational education and apprenticeship under the control of the Department of Education, eventually became two Acts, one dealing with continuation education and technical education under the Department of Education, and the other dealing with apprenticeship under the Department of Industry and Commerce. The initiative for this change in policy appears to have originated in the Department of Education. In explaining in the Dail why his Bill did not deal more fully with the recommendations of the Ingram Commission on apprenticeship, the Minister for Education stated that when he studied the heads of sections dealing with apprenticeship, he found that 5/6 of these were matters regulating, not the education of apprentices, but the whole question of apprenticeship. As such, he said, they belonged to another Department, that of Industry and Commerce. When the Vocational Education Bill came before the Dail, therefore, most of the sections in the original draft dealing with the establishment of apprenticeship committees, and the powers and duties of such committees as well as the definition of the term 'apprentice' had been removed.

There appears at least to have been a lack of prior consultation and co-ordination between Education and Industry and Commerce in acting on the Report of the Commission on Technical Education. On the other hand, it could be that the Department of Industry and Commerce considered that, under the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924, training of apprentices constituted 'labour services' and consequently was in its area of responsibility and, accordingly, insisted on promoting the Apprenticeship Bill. This late re-allocation of responsibilities had the effect of ensuring that the two Bills could not be considered in tandem in the Oireachtas as was originally planned, as the Education Bill was at a much more advanced stage than the Apprenticeship Bill. There was further

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delay when Industry and Commerce submitted the Heads of the Bill directly to the Cabinet without first submitting them to the Department of Finance. The result was that the Cabinet referred them back to the Department of Finance and this caused a further six months delay.(18)

#### **Role of the Department of Finance:**

The Department of Industry and Commerce appeared to be in some difficulty with the Department of Finance in relation to the Apprenticeship Bill. Two minuted comments in the Department of Finance file give an indication of the position. The Apprenticeship Bill was scheduled for its second reading in the Dail on 20 November, 1930, and in a memo of that date it was stated that the Department of Finance had not seen a copy of the Bill and:

It looks as if Industry and Commerce were determined on each and every occasion to ride roughshod over the procedure laid down by the Executive Council.(19)

As a copy of the Bill had not yet been received by 2 December, 1930, and 'as it is not known when a draft of the Bill will be available' the following comment was appended to a memo:

I understand privately that the D/I & C are not anxious to remain in charge of this Bill and are angling to have responsibility transferred to the D/Ed.(20)

The Department of Education was also in trouble, procedurally, with the Department of Finance in relation to the Vocational Education Bill. Although the draft Bill had been forwarded to Finance for its comments, some of which were acted on, the Bill was printed and circulated to the Dail deputies without the

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revised draft being referred back to Finance prior to printing. A minute dated 25 April, 1930, contains that Department's reaction:

The Dept. of Ed. have 'sold a dummy' in this matter and have not sent a revised draft for printing as arranged. We are now confronted with the final text of the Bill which has been printed and circulated to Deputies without our prior concurrence.

Being 'sold a dummy' on procedural matters was bad enough but the real problem, as far as Finance was concerned, was the expenditure aspect of the Bill, as indicated in the following memo on the file from H.P.Boland, the Establishment Officer, dated 3 June 1930:

... not only have we never been given any info as requested in letter of 10th. April about the financial effect of the measure, but a long list of amendments notified on 24th. May has not been examined from our point of view. I understand that the Committee Stage of the Bill has already been passed by the Dail. So far as our control of finance is concerned the reins seem to be on the horse's back at the moment. Some real danger may be discovered in a provision when it is too late for remedy.(21)

Apart from procedural difficulties and lack of consultation between the Departments involved, the main concern of the Department of Finance was the additional expenditure from State funds which the measures proposed in the two Bills would require. In the case of the Apprenticeship Bill the projected extra costs amounted to £5000 and, as it was envisaged that the proposed Apprenticeship Act would be operated through the existing Trades Boards system:

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No new staff will be required to deal with any Apprenticeship Committees that are at present foreseen and the other expenses that can arise in connection with the meetings of any Committees formed are trifling.(22)

There was, therefore, no problem for Finance in approving the Apprenticeship Bill. In the case of the Vocational Education Bill, however, the Department was very concerned about the expenditure implications. A figure of £153,000 supplied by the Department of Education was considered to be a 'gross underestimation of the liabilities which would ultimately be imposed on the Exchequer'.(23) It was pointed out that expenditure on education at £1.64 per head of the population was higher than in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, France or Canada. If improvements in the standard of education could be examined without regard to other considerations there would be very little disagreement on the issue but 'We must, however, preserve some sense of proportion in our expenditure on education'. The tension between the two Departments reached a climax when, as already explained, the Bill was circulated to the Dail deputies in June 1930. Although the Department of Finance realised that they had been outmanoeuvred by Education in getting the Bill through the Dail, 'by the end of 1930 the supremacy of the Department of Finance had been asserted' in relation to expenditure.

In his book, The Irish Department of Finance: 1922-1958, Ronan Fanning outlines the reasons for the concerns of the Department of Finance in relation to the control of expenditure. As early as March, 1922, the then Secretary of the Department, Joseph Brennan, issued a memorandum on the principles needed to secure efficient financial administration in the Free State. The memorandum provided that no action, such as initiating a new service 'or otherwise pledging the public purse' should be taken by any Department until the written approval of the

Ministry for Finance had first been obtained. He followed this with another memorandum, in April 1922, outlining the procedure to be followed by any Department which wished to proceed with a proposal necessitating additional expenditure. The proposal had to be embodied in an official written application to the Secretary, Ministry for Finance, whose decision on the matter would 'normally be taken as a final ruling'. It would appear that this memorandum had never been considered by the Provisional Government and, consequently, other Ministers questioned its authority. By 1930, however, there was a deepening economic and financial crisis: national income was steadily contracting and revenue was projected to fall, while increased expenditure was being initiated by legislation in areas such as public health, and 'elaborate building programmes for military, civil and educational purposes'. In 1931, the Department of Finance presented another memorandum to the Executive Council voicing its alarm at the situation and stating that the other Departments had failed to realise 'the serious financial position of the country'. The memorandum advocated that no new expenditure be undertaken, that the pay of teachers, gardai, the Army, old age pensioners and those on National Health Insurance (but not including the pay or pensions of civil servants) should be reduced and that there should be additional taxation.(24)

This, then, was the financial and administrative climate in which the new Vocational Education Act was being introduced and the reason for the Department of Finance's concern for the financial implications and the fear that as far as 'our control of finance is concerned the reins seems to be on the horse's back'. In the end, both Departments could be regarded as winners, the Minister for Education got his Bill passed but the Department of Finance called the tune on expenditure. For, subsequently, in discussions with the Minister for Education, it was agreed that the Act would be implemented gradually; the

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Minister did not envisage full development for at least 20 years. More than half of the VECs would be required to introduce the scheme without any increase in State grants and, in the case of the other committees, grants made would be related to the populations in their areas. The free transport scheme had been dropped and the proposal to provide a college for the training of teachers was abandoned.(25)

### 3. The Vocational Education Act. 1930

#### **Purpose and Content:**

In the Vocational Education Bill which was presented to the Oireachtas the purpose of the proposed Act was set out in simpler terms than those of the first draft of the Bill. It now read as follows:

An Act to make further and better provision in relation to continuation and technical education.

The references in the title of the first draft to the establishment of local vocational committees and to the regulation of the attendance and the employment of young persons had been removed, and the concept of continuation education had been included. (The Vocational Education Committees would, in fact, be a more effective statutory form of the local Technical Instruction Committees set up under the 1899 Act, and, the new Apprenticeship Act would provide for the regulation of the attendance and employment of young persons in the apprenticeship area). The Vocational Education Act did, however, as will be seen, retain some powers in relation to apprenticeship matters. As some of these powers,

for example the designation of trades and provision for the compulsory attendance of apprentices at classes, were also to be provided for in the Apprenticeship Act, the reason for making these provisions is not clear. During the debate on the Bill in the Oireachtas, the Minister for Education seemed to imply that it was an interim arrangement pending the passage of the Apprenticeship Act, stating:

We provided, so far as apprenticeship is concerned, for the close co-operation of the two Departments. While waiting for the other Bill to become law we have made provision even for compulsory attendance for technical education from 16 to 18 in certain cases. The Apprenticeship Committees not being capable of being set up under this Bill, we have followed the spirit of the Technical Commission in that respect, and we have arranged for consultation with trades when there is a question of introducing compulsory attendance for young employees in certain trades; that is consultation with employers and employees.(26)

At the Congress of the Irish Technical Education Association held in Cork, in 1930, there were a number of criticisms of the Bill which was being debated in the Oireachtas at the time. The Congress Report for 1930 identified some these as: that many of the smaller Urban Committees would lose their identity by being absorbed into County Committees; that vocational education should be financed in the same way as national education, by the State, and not through the local rates as these could not bear a fresh burden of taxation; the role of the inspectorate in the dismissal of teachers; a fear that adult education and Irish language classes would suffer; that music should be included in the definition of technical education for all areas and not solely for Dublin and Cork. On the other hand, the Report quotes Mr. T.P.Gill, one time



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Secretary of the Recess Committee and of the DATI who was in attendance, as saying, 'that taking the Bill as a whole, it was a noble piece of legislation, bearing manifestly the stamp of a great educational and administrative mind'.

Referring to the fact that the Bill had met with a certain amount of criticism because it was not revolutionary enough, Professor O'Sullivan explained the approach as follows;

we want to reform a system that has done a considerable amount of good work in order to enable it to do a great deal more work.(27)

The Bill made provision for Vocational Education Committees (VECs) with chief executive officers, responsible for the provision of continuation education and technical education, including higher technical education, to be financed by contributions from the local rates and from Exchequer funds. It provided for compulsory attendance, in certain circumstances, at continuation and technical classes with penalties for non-compliance, and for the amalgamation of certain urban and county vocational areas for administrative convenience. It gave a wide range of general powers to the Minister for Education with regard to special provision for the Gaeltacht areas, inquiries into the operations of VECs, and the keeping of records both by employers and VECs. These powers also covered conditions of service of teachers and other staff employed by the VECs, and the training and certification of teachers. The Bill provided for the payment of grants to schools, other than those operated by the VECs, in which continuation and technical education classes were available, but 'nothing in this Act shall be so construed as to interfere with or affect any certified industrial school or certified reformatory school'. Finally, provision was made for consultative councils to advise and assist the Minister.(28) It should be noted that, although

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the Act provided for the designation of trades in certain circumstances, this only related to designation for the purpose of compulsory attendance at educational courses and did not include such matters as age of entry to apprenticeship, period of apprenticeship, wages etc., which were provided for through designation under the Apprenticeship Act.

The fact that the Vocational Education Act, with very few amendments, has met the needs of the vocational education sector, including the development of the Regional Technical Colleges, up to the present time, is an indication of its comprehensiveness. It was no wonder, therefore, that at the time of its inception in 1930, 'the Department of Finance approached the Bill with questioning caution and with a determination to limit its implementation geographically and postpone its full implementation', the main worry of the Department being 'that the measure would be implemented with enthusiasm and thereby cause a rapid rise in public educational expenditure'.(29) Much of the Act was indigenous, being a development and an improvement on the Acts of 1889 and 1899. In relation to the Committees, there had been criticism that they were a nuisance and should be done away with, but it was generally agreed that industrialists were more likely to be influenced by local committees, in touch with local needs, than by departmental officials. Under the Act the Committees were much smaller, the total membership restricted to fourteen including the chairman, with provision for the representation of employee and employer organisations. Financing of the VECs and forward budgeting was made more secure by the requirement to levy a compulsory rate of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  d. in the pound in county areas, and 3 d. in borough and urban council areas, and by the provision of grants for school buildings. Although there was some concern expressed in the Senate debate on the issue of compulsory rates for technical education, and to the fact that there was provision for the amount of the rate to increase to a

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maximum of 4 d. in county areas, and 6 d. in borough and urban areas, there were no serious objections to the VECs or to the financial arrangements, nor indeed, to improvements in the conditions of service or in the training of teachers.

### Technical Education:

In the Act technical education was defined as;

Education pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce and other industrial pursuits (including the occupations of girls and women connected with the household) ... and includes education in science and art (including in the county boroughs of Dublin and Cork, music) and also physical training.(30)

Technical education had been in place for over thirty years and had come to be accepted as part of the educational scene. However, in the Senate debate its value was questioned by Senator Oliver Gogarty who declared, 'I think technical education is highly overrated and is a distraction', and added:

... there is a great divorce between the technically educated people in Ireland and those associated with the various crafts and this arises largely from the unwillingness of the guilds to allow technically educated people into their membership. One would want to have a grandfather among the stone masons in order to get a son into the trade, and no technical education will break down that self protection among unions ... (31)

Some aspects of the Bill appeared to cause particular concern. The Irish language lobby feared that the Irish classes for adults in technical schools, for which a special rate had been

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provided, would not be possible under the new Act, as 'technical education' applied to persons between 16 and 18 years. The Minister was able to reassure them, pointing out that 'there was nothing in the Bill suggesting anything of the kind'(32) and that the 16 to 18 year condition related only to circumstances where persons in employment were required to attend certain classes. A novel slant on this aspect of the Bill, and one with a sting in its tail, appeared in The Irish Times of the 23 August, 1929. It referred to 'a Bill being prepared to set up continuation schools', stating that the special rules would apply to boys and girls apprenticed to trades or business requiring them to attend for a certain number of hours per week. The report continued:

The curriculum will cover a general education course, in which, of course, the Gaelic language will have a predominant place. It is expected that the new schools will provide occupations for the many Gaelic teachers now unemployed: The cost of the system it is stated will be considerable, but it is felt that all right-thinking taxpayers will regard it as money well spent since the aim of the scheme is the creation of an educated Gaelic speaking artisan class.(33)

#### **Continuation Education:**

The concept of continuation schools was new and also gave rise to some concerns. It was seen by many as being a continuation of the education already provided at primary school and, therefore, competing with secondary education. It was defined in the Bill as;

... education to continue and supplement education provided in the elementary schools and includes general

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and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufactures, agriculture, commerce and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for the improvement of young persons in the early stages of such employment.(34)

In the Dail, the Minister admitted that he did not like the term 'continuation education' but could not find a better phrase. He said he was not speaking of general education in continuation schools but 'of preparation for the different trades and the more intimate instruction that might be given to apprentices in different trades'.(35) He quoted a statement in the Ingram Report that the teaching in these schools should be on the lines suited to adults rather than to school children. Pupils would be expected to look upon the school as having a practical connection with their daily life. This education would do away with the dislike on the part of young people for agricultural work in the country and industrial work in the towns. In the Committee Stage in the Dail the Minister had to refuse to accept an amendment put down by Mr. Frank Fahy, Fianna Fail spokesman on education, seeking to extend the definition of continuation education to include 'instruction in the Irish language and literature, national history, music, topography and folklore'. One deputy, speaking later on this issue, said, 'the more culture we give to our manual workers the better both for them and for the country as a whole'. In giving his reasons for rejecting the amendment the Minister remarked that what it envisaged was not merely a Vocational Bill but a Vocational Cultural Bill, and that this would give a wrong idea of the purpose of the Bill. In further exchanges on this topic he made the following remarks with, perhaps, a note of exasperation :

I do not know, I must say what 'cultural education is', I confess great ignorance. At one time it was defined as any

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education that was useless. I presume that was not meant.(36)

Even after the Bill was passed the Minister was still under pressure on this issue. In December 1930, and after the Department had issued instructions to VECs to the effect that Vocational Schools should have a definite technical trend and that the mode of conducting such schools and classes, and the methods of instruction employed, should differ radically from those of primary and secondary schools, a question was raised in the Dail by Deputy T.J.O'Connell of the Irish National Teachers Organisation. He maintained that in the Oireachtas debates on the Bill the Minister had stated that the education to be given in continuation schools to children between the ages of 14 and 16 years was to be 'mainly of a general and cultural type', and that the instructions issued by the Department were a reversal of this policy. In his reply, the Minister dismissed the allegations and pointed out that in the debates on the Bill:

One of the matters most strongly emphasised by me on these occasions was the difference that ought to exist between the instruction provided by the Committees and the education of a general type that is given in the ordinary primary schools - and in the secondary schools - throughout the country. Sometimes I had to refer to the fact that it was not intended to confine the instruction to manual subjects, but I was careful to insist that when what are called 'cultural' subjects are taught, especially between the ages mentioned, they should have a strong practical bias. (37)

The provisions in the Bill for the enforcement of compulsory attendance at continuation classes, not exceeding 180 hours per year, for 'young persons' and for 'other persons' in

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employment, both of which categories would include apprentices, also generated discussion. Included in the relevant sections of the Bill were powers by which the Minister, in certain circumstances, could prosecute employers who failed to provide details of their eligible employees, and who failed to release them without loss of pay to attend prescribed courses. The Bill provided for fines of twenty shillings on a successful prosecution. Deputy Good, who represented employer interests, had been a member of the Ingram Commission. He strongly advocated apprenticeships as a means of dealing with the high levels of youth unemployment which was a particular concern of his, and he felt that there was a danger in this type of legislation. Speaking to an amendment to increase the amount of the fine to five pounds, Deputy Good stated that a number of employers at the time were not anxious to take on apprentices, and argued:

If we increase these fines I am quite sure it will only tend to increase the difficulty of getting those employers to do their duty with regard to apprentices.(38)

The amendment had been tabled by Deputy Colohan, who represented labour interests, and, in addition to increased fines, he wanted legislation which would compel employers to take on apprentices. Eventually, the amendment was withdrawn on the grounds that the threat of prosecution was deterrent enough. This issue was, however, to surface again in the debate on the Apprenticeship Bill.

#### **Attitude of the Catholic Hierarchy:**

Another issue, which did not emerge publicly, was the attitude of the Catholic Church to what was, in effect, a state controlled statutory non-denominational education system. Both

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continuation education, which applied to the 14 to 16 year age group, and technical education, applying to 16 to 18 year olds, could be regarded as competing directly with the secondary education system controlled largely by the Church. The Irish Hierarchy sent a deputation, led by Dr. Keane, Bishop of Limerick, to discuss the matter with the Minister. They were concerned with continuation education, which they saw as an extension of primary education and which appeared to them to be compulsory. They were also concerned about the co-education aspect of the continuation schools and the holding of some classes at night-time, especially in country areas. In a letter to Dr. Keane dated 31 October 1930,(39) the Minister again spelled out that continuation education was of a different type and it in no way cut across what was being done in secondary schools. He pointed out that in the progress of the Bill through the Oireachtas he had striven:

to secure that the Act did not run counter to established Catholic practice in the country, or to the spirit of the Maynooth decrees on these matters.(40)

The Minister, in his letter, also proposed that facilities for the giving of religious instruction should be provided by the VECs and that the bishops 'would undertake the responsibility of providing the actual teaching when facilities are given'.

The arrangements agreed between the Hierarchy and the Minister were to inhibit the development of vocational education for the next 35 years. They ensured :

that vocational schools would not be allowed to teach those subjects nor prepare for those examinations which gave access to university and white collar employment. In practice this meant that the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations were not available to vocational



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school students from 1930 to the middle sixties when the restrictions were removed.(41)

The Minister did retain in the Vocational Education Act powers to make special orders which could apply, not to apprentices as such, but to persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years who were in employment and this, of course, would include apprentices. Continuation education did include practical training for the improvement of young persons in the early stages of employment in trades, and technical education included education pertaining to trades.

#### **Provisions for Enforcement :**

In Parts 5 and 6 of the Act dealing with the enforcement of continuation and of technical education, the Minister could, either on application by a VEC or on his own authority, make orders establishing districts to which Parts 5 and 6 of the Act would apply, and consequently ensure the enforcement there of continuation or technical education as the case may be. In districts where these orders were in force, young persons in employment, and this would include apprentices, could be required to attend appropriate courses of instruction for a maximum of 180 hours in any financial year. Provision was made whereby employers who refused to release such employees could be prosecuted and fined. Where persons were required to attend such courses no fees were to be charged. Attendance officers could be appointed by the VEC to police the arrangements. In addition, under Part 6, where the Minister had already made a 'district order', he could, by making another order, specify trades to be 'designated' trades for the purposes of the Act. However, before making such an order, the Minister was required to consult with an apprenticeship committee for the trade, where such a committee existed, and, where no apprenticeship

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committee existed, with representatives of employers and employees in the trade. The VECs were required to advertise the courses and to arrange them as regards 'times and seasons in such manner as may suit the designated trades'.(42) The Minister, therefore, should he wish to use them, had very wide powers to provide for the education of young persons in employment. In the area of the designation of trades, the Minister had stronger powers than were available to the Minister for Industry and Commerce in the Apprenticeship Act where the Minister could also designate trades, but only if requested to do so either by employers or employees. The designation by the Minister for Education was, of course, for the purposes of education only.

#### **Conclusion:**

There were a number of provisions in the first draft of the Vocational Education Bill which are worthy of note in the light of later developments. One proposed to give the Minister authority to establish and maintain training colleges to train teachers in the new teaching methods envisaged, particularly in continuation schools. Another was that a free transport system should be provided in certain circumstances. Both of these proposals were opposed by the Department of Finance, the first on the grounds that secondary teachers had to bear the cost of their own training, and the second because if it were conceded for vocational schools it would also have to be provided for primary and secondary schools and both were eventually dropped by the Department of Education. The Vocational Education Act became law on 21 July, 1930, but the Department of Finance, which considered that at one stage it had been 'sold a dummy', had, as has already been outlined, the final say in relation to expenditure and the pace of implementation of its provisions.

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F.S.L.Lyons, in Ireland since the Famine, wrote with regard to the Irish education system at the foundation of the State;

the problem Irish educationalists had to face ..... (was) to throw off the dead hand of history and to create for their country a system of education that should be not only indigenous but modern as well,(43)

The 1930 Vocational Education Act was certainly indigenous having its genesis in Horace Plunkett's Recess Committee, and being based on the experience gained in the period between 1900 and 1930. In introducing the Bill the Minister was realistic enough in his aims, saying that it was idle to pretend that there was any chance of putting a system that was ideally perfect into place, that he hoped to introduce order where before there had been a certain amount of confusion and that he did not think that technical education could create employment. Nevertheless, he did seek to improve on traditional teaching methods, to broaden the educational base and to make his new programmes relevant to the personal needs of the pupils and to the social and economic needs of the period. Getting rid of the 'dead hand of history' was, however, to take longer, and the realisation that the provision of a modern educational system had an economic cost was only beginning to dawn.

#### **4. The Apprenticeship Act. 1931**

##### **Trade Boards:**

When the Department of Industry and Commerce, with the agreement of the Department of Education, undertook responsibility for the drafting of an apprenticeship Bill, the models used were the South African and Queensland

Apprenticeship Acts and the Trades Boards Acts of 1909 and 1918. The proposed Bill would give effect to the recommendations of the Ingram Commission in relation to apprenticeship. The South African and Queensland Acts had been specifically referred to as models for Irish legislation in the Commission's Report and the senior inspector in the Technical Instruction Branch of the Department of Education had visited South Africa to study the operation of the South African Act. The Trade Boards Acts had made provision for the setting up of boards of employers and employees and 'appointed persons', including a chairman, on a voluntary basis in certain trades, with the power to fix minimum rates of wages. In addition, a Trade Board could consider any matter referred to it concerning the industrial conditions of the trade, by the Board of Trade or by any Government department. Provision was also made for the establishment of district trade committees. Responsibility for the operation of the Acts rested with the Minister for Industry and Commerce, who appointed officers of that Department to oversee their enforcement. The Ingram Commission had recommended the establishment of statutory representative apprenticeship committees, with a wide range of functions, for each trade or group of trades, and which would advise the Government on apprenticeship matters. Trade Board Committees, where they already existed, were seen by the Department of Industry and Commerce as a stock to which the apprenticeship committees could be grafted. When the Heads of the Bill were considered by the Department of Finance there was a good deal of enthusiasm expressed:

It is the very machinery that has hitherto been lacking for enabling each industry to re-organise itself from within, to examine its own efficiency, to take steps to raise its standards of workmanship where found to be low and to estimate in advance its needs in the matter of recruitment. A recommendation from such a body in a matter

that might require legislation, or something akin to it, would enable the Minister concerned to proceed without hesitation.(44)

It was accepted that the State and industry would benefit from the deliberations 'in which would be pooled the practical wisdom of the particular trade and the accumulated experience and statistical information of the two Departments concerned'.(45) The fact that existing structures and staff could be used was an added attraction for the Department of Finance, particularly as it was felt that the staff looking after the Trade Boards did not appear to be very busy. However, comments such as these would lead one to believe that the Bill envisaged by the Department of Industry and Commerce was broader than a purely apprenticeship measure. Other than to say that the Heads of the Apprenticeship Bill could be described briefly as an extension of the machinery operated under the Trade Boards Acts, the Department of Finance had little comment to make except to advise that the proposals should be approved in principle as soon as possible, so that the Apprenticeship Bill and the Vocational Education Bill could proceed in step through the Oireachtas. This was, no doubt, inspired by the fact that the person dealing with the file in the Department of Finance, Mr. Walter Doolin, had been a member of the Commission on Technical Education. There were, however, three suggestions made by the Department of Finance which are of interest. One, already mentioned, was the question of a trade test at the end of apprenticeship as a qualification for entry to full tradesmanship, and it appears that this was to be considered further by the Departments of Education and of Industry and Commerce. The second related to the proposal to fix an upper age limit of 18 years for entry to apprenticeship: the Department saw no reason why a man or woman above that age could not become an apprentice. The third was the proposal that Government departments should be included in the legislation.

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It was felt this should be referred to the Attorney-General for advice. The only Government institutions likely to employ apprentices were the Post Office and the Air Corps.

### **The Apprenticeship Bill:**

The proposal to introduce the Apprenticeship Bill was first discussed by the Cabinet on 30 July, 1929, but the matter was postponed pending consideration by the Department of Finance. Following examination by that Department, the proposed legislation was again brought before the Cabinet and authority was granted for the preparation of a Bill, on 14th. January, 1930. It took over a year to prepare the Bill and it was approved by the Cabinet on 25 February, 1931, for introduction to the Dail.(46) The intention, therefore, that the two Bills should be considered in tandem was not realised, and the Vocational Education Act was on the statute books before the debate on the Apprenticeship Bill began in the Oireachtas. The Bill had a rough passage through the Dail and it would be a fair assessment to say that, while all sides of the House welcomed a Bill dealing with apprenticeship, the general feeling at the end of the debate was one of disappointment with its provisions. In fact, one or two deputies felt that it would be better to have it withdrawn and a new measure introduced. There were particularly bitter exchanges at times between the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr. Patrick McGilligan, and the Fianna Fail spokesman, Mr. Sean Lemass. There was a tendency among the deputies and senators who contributed to the debates to protect the interests of the groups to which they were affiliated.

Among the matters which gave rise to particular concern were the proposals that the designation of trades and the appointment of apprenticeship committees should be a voluntary

arrangement rather than a compulsory one by Ministerial order, and the fact that there was no provision for an overall co-ordinating body, that function being vested in the Minister. The linkage with the Trade Boards was objected to as was the fact that there was no outright prohibition of apprentice premiums, unlike the South African Act. The provision for the prosecution of employers and of trade unions, and the imposition of fines in specified cases, caused particular resentment, especially on the part of the labour deputies, and Sean Lemass. Even if the Apprenticeship Committees were established on the voluntary principle, they would be required to make certain rules, and could, if they thought fit, make others in relation to apprenticeship, and this was also a cause for concern. There was opposition to rules that might impose educational entry qualifications and it was pointed out that, even if these were at the lowest level then available, the Primary Certificate, only 7,000 young persons would be qualified, while up to 100,000 would be debarred from getting apprenticeships. The provision to require, in certain cases, that employers should take on a specified number of apprentices in relation to the number of craftsmen employed or face prosecution was seen as one likely to cause particular difficulty. Objections were also raised to having 'appointed members' on the Committees. There was dissatisfaction with the layout of the Bill, and the number of rules and regulations was seen as inordinate and an inhibiting factor in getting any action under the proposed legislation.

#### **Oireachtas Debates:**

Speaking to the Bill in the Oireachtas, the Minister stressed its voluntary nature, even though the Ingram Commission had suggested compulsion, and said:

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if there is no agreement between employer and employee in any particular trade.... I do not see how it would be possible to enforce a regulation that might be established by a higher authority ... In the end it will depend on the employer whether or not the scheme of apprenticeship will make good and how far it will make good.(47)

He outlined the mandatory rules that a Committee, having been set up, must make. These determined: [1] what constituted employment by way of apprenticeship; [2] the period of apprenticeship and the probationary period; [3] minimum wages; and [4] working hours. Discretionary rules would relate to: [1] educational entry qualifications; [2] age limits for commencement of apprenticeship; [3] the type of training to be provided by employers; and [4] the number of persons to be employed by way of apprenticeship. When rules were made and when confirmed by the Minister then a breach of these rules would be an offence under the Act. Interestingly, the definition of an apprentice as set out in the first draft of the Bill, and already referred to, had been removed, and it was up to each Committee, when it was established, to define 'an apprentice' for their particular trade and district. Neither was there any provision in the Bill for a certificate of competence at the end of apprenticeship. The Minister said, in response to a query from a deputy, that 'learners' were to be brought within the scope of the Bill.

But remember, the Bill deals with apprentices as we used to know them; that is people who are going to be trained for entry into the old type of skilled trade. It is also intended to cover learners as they used to be called in the Trade Boards Acts, and there are many processes at present in some of the newer trades in which very little in the way of educational attainments is needed.(48)



This would, of course, greatly widen the scope of the Bill and it is doubtful whether its implications had been fully thought out. If, as the Minister intimated, he had hoped to see most trades designated, the number of Committees, all with their own specific rules and regulations and special orders applying only in their own districts, and all subject to confirmation by the Minister, would be awesome to contemplate. Two comments, one from Deputy Sean Lemass and the other from a Deputy Coburn, who described himself as a worker, give an indication of the dissatisfaction felt by the deputies. Mr. Lemass, who was very unhappy with the Bill, and who at one stage suggested that it should be withdrawn, commented:

I saw it stated in a weekly journal that this Bill is a typical product of a Civil Service department in so far as it exalts the machine into a matter of policy and makes the principle something of a secondary consideration.(49)

Deputy Coburn, speaking with experience of the work situation at a time of economic recession, was concerned that the imposition of too many rules and regulations would retard apprenticeship rather than foster it as the Bill envisaged, and made the following observations:

I find myself in some difficulty in discussing this matter because in the country there is practically no work for apprentices at all. If you impose these regulations upon employers it may be that you will be defeating the very purpose that this Bill has in view. ... I think that we should see that the work is there before we pass rules and regulations governing it and if we did that the country would be much better off. I am absolutely opposed to any more regulations being imposed upon the employers or upon the workmen.(50)

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There was a heated discussion on the proposal to compel individual employers to take on a specified number of apprentices as decided by the Apprenticeship Committee, and the provision for penalties where they did not do so. It was anticipated that this would bring the employers into conflict with the law if they refused to take on the required number, and with the unions, if the numbers exceeded union rules. The outcome was that the Minister introduced an amendment to the effect that, if a trade union tried to prevent an employer from complying with the law, the trade union could be prosecuted and fined. It was pointed out by deputies that if this was the case, there was no reason why employers and trade unions should agree to voluntary designation when, by doing so, they would become liable to prosecution in certain circumstances. Deputy Lemass maintained that this approach would make the legislation unworkable as there was no way that the Minister would prosecute trade unions. There was an even stronger reaction in the Senate from Senator Johnson, representing labour interests, who considered that the proposal to prosecute and fine trade unions was a reaction on the part of the Government to their activities. He felt that it would destroy any chance of co-operation or collaboration by the unions in the working of the Bill, and would make it impossible for a trade union to conduct a strike. He concluded by saying that there had been a fairly persistent attempt to obstruct and impede trade unions in their work, and the proposal on the part of the Government was:

an expression of a growing reactionary spirit and I think it is going to find expression in legislation. Whether that is so or not, I am not prepared to rely on Parliaments elected by a majority of farmers to safeguard the interests of trade unionists.(51)

The discussion on apprentice premiums followed similiar lines with labour representatives, supported by Deputy Lemass,

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seeking the total prohibition of premiums, except where the apprentice lived-in with the employer, and the Minister seeking to leave the decision to the Apprenticeship Committees. Provision was made for penalties where rules were not complied with, and again, this was seen as a disincentive to the establishment of committees on a voluntary basis. Deputy Lemass expressed dissatisfaction with the attitude of the Minister on the issue and felt that the general view of the Dail was that premiums were undesirable and should be prohibited. On the question of compulsory powers rather than the voluntary approach to the designation of trades, he had this to say:

The general feeling of the Dail appeared to be that compulsory power should rest with the Minister. He has, however, made it clear that he has no intention of availing of it. It is my view that the Bill, if applied in the manner in which the Minister for Industry and Commerce has indicated, will be practically useless, that in fact the Bill will only operate in respect of such trades as do not require it.(52)

Among the interesting points raised during the debate was the position of an apprentice should the employer become bankrupt, the concept of apprenticeship to the trade rather than to the employer and the suggestion that the apprentice should be bound to the Committee. Deputy Good, as in the debate on the Vocational Education Bill, referred to the employment potential of apprenticeship, and stated that although there were 9,282 craftsmen in the building industry there were only 961 apprentices. He maintained that on the basis of the normal 3:1 ratio of craftsmen to apprentices, the number of the latter should be 3,304. Deputy Good was also a member of the Juvenile Employment Committee, in Dublin, and had a particular interest in this area. He wanted responsibility for the proper training of apprentices to rest with the Minister and not with the

employer. A number of deputies, contributing to the debate on the compulsory vis-a-vis the voluntary approach, suggested that the latter might be tried for a few years and, if not successful, then compulsory powers should be acquired. On the question of an overall co-ordinating authority, Deputy Moore made the following points:

You may have a number of Committees making quite different rules with regard to apprentices, as to the hours they should work, the fees that should be paid and as to the length of time they have got to serve and so on. No one, apparently, has the right to veto any of their decisions or to say it is unreasonable.(53)

Deputy Lemass surmised that one of the reasons for the small number of apprentices was their low rates of pay, and he suggested that employers should be subsidised to give better remuneration to them. One deputy wanted an amendment introduced to ensure that, before Committees made any rules, they 'must take into account practices, customs and agreements in the trade', whereas others wanted to make it mandatory on the Committees, instead of voluntary as the Bill proposed, to make rules relating to educational entry qualifications and to the training and instruction of apprentices in a specified manner. When the Bill was in its final stage in the Dail, Deputies Lemass, O'Connell and Good all expressed very little enthusiasm for it and it appeared as if the Bill might be defeated. Sean Lemass summarised his views as follows and was supported by T.J.O'Connell:

I think that although no advantage will be secured by refusing to pass the Bill now, we can only do so in the knowledge that it is not likely to be effective and that the Minister has only introduced it here because he considers it his duty to do so following the report of the

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Commission on Technical Education without any intention of making their recommendations effective.(54)

The Bill passed both Houses of the Oireachtas on 17 December, 1931, and, as was the requirement at the time, it received the King's Assent, through powers delegated to the Governor General, on 21 December, 1931, and so became law.

### **The Scope of the Apprenticeship Act:**

The Act provided for the designation of a trade, either throughout the Free State or in any part of it, on the making of a special order at the discretion of the Minister for Industry and Commerce. The procedure to be followed in the making of this special order was: notification of the Minister's intention to make such an order; the making available of a draft of it; the entering of objections to the order, if any; the Minister at his discretion to amend the order to accommodate the objections and, where deemed necessary, the holding of an inquiry and the submission of a report for consideration by him. Following the making of a designation order, the Minister was then required, after consultation with a Trade Board, if one existed, to make another order, establishing an apprenticeship district in which an apprenticeship committee would be set up for the designated trade. Provision was made in the Act for the constitution of apprenticeship committees of equal and even representation of employers and employees, with not more than three appointed members. Special arrangements were made for the situation where an existing Trade Board became the Apprenticeship Committee and where Trade Boards, which had existed prior to the foundation of the State, operated in districts which were not wholly within the Free State. A chairman and a secretary

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would be appointed by the Minister who also laid down procedures for the operation of the Committee.

### **Apprenticeship Committees:**

Each Committee had the powers to make rules governing apprenticeship matters in respect of its own trade and district. These rules were divided into 'shall' rules and 'may' rules. The 'shall' rules were four in number. They classified those who were to be regarded as apprentices, specified the period of apprenticeship and the probationary period, fixed the minimum rates of pay (excluding overtime) for apprentices and the maximum hours of work (excluding overtime). The 'may' rules were six in number and dealt with educational entry qualifications; age of entry to apprenticeship; training rules; the number of apprentices to be employed by a particular employer; apprentice premiums (permission, prohibition and amount) and finally there were rules relating to the minimum rates of overtime wages. Again, notification of intention to make rules had to be given. Rules made by each Committee had to be submitted to the Minister for approval and, if confirmed by him, had the force of law in relation to apprentices in the trade and in the district specified. Failure to comply with such rules was an offence for which fines of up to £20 could be imposed, and in some cases, continuing fines for each day that the offence continued. There was provision, too, for a Committee to release both parties from an apprenticeship agreement, or to modify the agreement, or transfer the apprentice to another employer. The term 'apprentice' was defined as a person classified as employed by way of apprenticeship in the designated trade and in the specified apprenticeship district for which the Committee had been established. Employers were required, under penalty of prosecution, to keep certain records and have them available

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for inspection by authorised officers. Penalties were provided for falsifying records. Any person who prevented an employer from complying with any of the rules confirmed by the Minister could also be prosecuted.

With regard to the education of apprentices: an Apprenticeship Committee could make representations to the Minister for Education to have the appropriate VEC provide suitable courses of technical instruction. When courses were provided during normal working hours and at a place within a distance of three miles from the premises where the apprentice was employed, there was provision for the making of an attendance order by the Apprenticeship Committee. When such an order was in force, and when it was served personally both on the apprentice and on the employer, failure to comply with it was an offence for which there was an initial fine of twenty shillings on each offender. Where fees were required in respect of any course of instruction for which an attendance order was in force, the fees were payable by the Apprenticeship Committee. These Committees were required to investigate any dispute between an employer and an apprentice if either of them requested it. A register of apprentices had to be kept by each Committee and employers were required to notify particulars of apprentices employed by them. Authorised officers, formally appointed by the Minister, were given fairly wide powers of entry to premises, and there was provision for the compulsory display of notices where apprentices were employed.(55)

**Evaluation:**

The Apprenticeship Act had inauspicious beginnings. It was given a false start in the Department of Education, it appeared to be unwanted in the Department of Industry and Commerce, it was forced into a hybrid association with the existing Trade

Boards, and modelled on two foreign legislative measures. It seems to have been drawn up in the Department of Industry and Commerce without any real discussion with what are now called the 'social partners', and its final preparation was rushed to meet the Minister's deadline.

The ethos of the Act itself was excessively legalistic and bureaucratic. The provisions for the prosecution of employers and trade unions, and the imposition of legal sanctions against them in certain cases, would not encourage either group to operate it on a voluntary basis as was envisaged. The requirement for separate apprenticeship committees for particular trades and districts; mandatory and discretionary rules and regulations; the procedures for bringing these into force and providing for their supervision and implementation on the ground must have been an administrative nightmare for the few civil servants involved. The Act was introduced at a time of severe national and international economic depression when jobs and employment opportunities were scarce and where employer/trade union relationships were only in their infancy. The trade union movement felt under threat from legislation and would be wary of any Act limiting its powers, particularly when it proposed legal sanctions against individual unions. The craft unions, in particular, would be most reluctant to surrender or even to share with employers or the State their power and influence to decide who was to become an apprentice and hence a member of their union where every additional tradesman would be competing with their members for scarce employment opportunities. Unlike the Vocational Education Act, which had been based on some thirty years of experience of technical instruction under the DATI, the Apprenticeship Act was a new and unknown form of legislation. There had been a significant amount of cooperation between employers, trade unions and educationalists through local voluntary apprenticeship committees under the DATI. However, putting



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this into a legal framework, as the Apprenticeship Act set out to do, may not have been the wisest decision. It might have been better, initially, to have built on what had been developed under the DATI in the period from 1900 onwards and to have made provision for apprenticeship technical training and education under the Vocational Education Act as was originally proposed in the first draft of that Bill. In this event, the Department of Industry and Commerce could then have been given responsibility for general workplace conditions for all young workers. As was pointed out later, under the Apprenticeship Act, Industry and Commerce, while being legally responsible for apprentice training and education, had no responsibility for the provision or control of the facilities to provide these.

It is true to say, however, that most of the defects in the subsequent operation of the Apprenticeship Act had already been identified during the Oireachtas debates. Perhaps, its subsequent destiny was influenced, also, by the fact that the Minister for Industry and Commerce, who was to be responsible for its implementation under the new Fianna Fail Government, Mr. Sean Lemass, had been so critical of the measure, in his role as opposition spokesman, during its passage through the Dail.

There is one final point to make with regard to these two Acts. It relates to their different origins - one native, the other foreign - and the contrasting processes from which they emerged. The Vocational Education Act was 'home grown'. It had its origins in the work of a group of Irishmen, led by Horace Plunkett, in the Recess Committee, who defined the problems in the sphere of technical education in Ireland, and devised policies to solve them. Although members of the Recess Committee had made study visits to a number of countries, their solutions were not imported: they were Irish solutions which

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were tested in the period 1900 - 1930, found wanting in some respects and modified in the 1930 Act. In spite of the problems it encountered in its first thirty years of operation, this Act has served the Irish people well. On the other hand, the Apprenticeship Act was largely an imported measure, which had been developed for a country very different in size, economic organisation and culture from that in which it was now to be applied. It was grafted on to a poorly developed existing base with little modification. To borrow a comment from Professor J. J. Lee:

imports substituted for the theoretical originality the situation required.(56)

It was, as will be seen, largely ineffective as far as apprenticeship in Ireland was concerned.

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- (14) File S 0084/0013/29 op. cit.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Ibid., Correspondence between Depts. of Education and Finance, dated 26 and 30 July 1929.
- (18) File S. 2402 A - Apprenticeship Act 1929 Cabinet File, Dept. of An Taoiseach.( Dublin: National Archives)
- (19) File S 0084/0022/29 op. cit. Memo, 20 Nov. 1930.
- (20) Ibid., Memo, 2 Dec. 1930.
- (21) Ibid., Memo, 3 June 1930.
- (22) File S 0084/0022/29, op. cit., Minute 2 Nov. 1929.
- (23) File S 0084/0013/29, op. cit., Minute to Sec. 3 Aug.1929.
- (24) Ibid.

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- (25) Seamus O Buachalla, Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland. (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1988) pp.303-305
- (26) Dail Debates Vol. 34, Col. 1738, 14 May 1930.
- (27) Ibid., Col. 1760.
- (28) Vocational Education Act, 1930. No. 29 in public statutes of the Oireachtas, Section 104.
- (29) Seamus O Buachalla, op. cit., p.303.
- (30) Vocational Education Act, 1930, op. cit., Part 1, para.4.
- (31) Senate Debates, Vol.13, No. 1, Cols. 1984,1985, 2 July 1930.
- (32) Dail Debates, Vol. 34. Col. 1743, 14 May, 1930.
- (33) The Irish Times, Friday, 23 Aug. 1929.
- (34) Vocational Education Act, 1930. op. cit. Part 1, para. 3.
- (35) Dail Debates, Vol. 34, Col. 1749, 14 May, 1930.
- (36) Ibid., Vol. 35, Col. 238, 29 May, 1930.
- (37) Ibid., Vol. 36, Cols. 1049,1050, 10 Dec. 1930.
- (38) Ibid., Vol. 35, Col. 273, 29 May, 1930.
- (39) Seamus O Buachalla, op. cit. App. 3, pp.399-403.
- (40) John Coolahan, Irish Education - Its History and Structure (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1981) p.98.
- (41) Seamus O Buachalla, op. cit. p.64.
- (42) Vocational Education Act, 1930. op. cit. Part 6, para. 83(3)
- (43) F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland since the Famine.(Glasgow: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971) p.645.
- (44) File, S 0084/0022/29 - Dept. of Finance. op. cit. Minute Examination of Apprenticeship Bill 1929, dated 2 Nov. 1929.
- (45) Ibid.
- (46) File, S.2402 A Apprenticeship Act 1929. op. cit.
- (47) Dail Debates, Vol. 38, Cols. 411,412, 29 April 1931.
- (48) Ibid., Col. 444.
- (49) Ibid., Vol. 39, Col. 195, 11 June 1931.
- (50) Ibid., Col. 263. 11 June 1931.
- (51) Senate Debates, Vol.14, Col. 2474, 3 Dec. 1931.
- (52) Dail Debates, Vol.40, Col. 726, 23 Oct. 1931.
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- (53) Ibid., Vol. 38, Col. 430, 29 April 1931.
- (54) Ibid., Vol. 40, Col. 727, 21 Oct. 1931.
- (55) Apprenticeship Act, 1931. No. 56 in public statutes of the Oireachtas.
- (56) J.J. Lee, op. cit., p.628.

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## Chapter Eight

### APPRENTICESHIP IN THE PERIOD 1930 TO 1960

#### Overview:

With the passing of the Vocational Education Act of 1930 and the Apprenticeship Act of 1931 it would seem that most of the problems identified by both the Samuelson Commission (1886) and the Ingram Commission (1927), in relation to technical education and apprenticeship, were on the way to being resolved. This potential would have been strengthened by the compulsory attendance legislation of 1926, which established 14 as the upper age limit for compulsory schooling, thereby ensuring that children under that age could not be employed, and by the introduction, albeit on an optional basis, of the Primary Certificate Examination, in 1929. This established a nationally defined standard of education and could be availed of by employers in the selection of young people for employment and apprenticeship. However, it was a drawback that, although drawing and manual instruction were included in the primary school curriculum, they remained as optional subjects and were not widely availed of. The continuation school courses, set up under the 1930 Act, provided a new form of state education which was work-related and, though optional, could be made compulsory by Ministerial Order. The courses were specifically geared towards local employment opportunities for those in the fourteen to sixteen year age group, who wished to take up employment rather than embark on the academic programme of education provided in the secondary schools, which led to careers in the Civil Service and the professions or to university. Technical education would benefit from the fact that it would be available only to those over sixteen years of

age, and would no longer be required to devote some of its resources to preparatory type courses to equip students with inadequate elementary education to undergo technical instruction. The increased and more secure funding provided for the new Vocational Education Committees (VECs), the provision of capital for new buildings, the flexibility to meet local needs built into the system and the streamlining of the Committees, with provision for the involvement of representatives of employers and employees, augured well for the future.

In the area of apprenticeship, even though the shortcomings of the 1931 Act had been identified in its passage through the Oireachtas, there was adequate provision in the legislation for the establishment of effective apprenticeship systems in those industries where employers and workers were prepared to take the initiative and co-operate in their development. Because of the nature of the apprenticeship legislation, however, and although the Minister for Industry and Commerce had an overall co-ordinating role, the setting up of one national apprenticeship system was not possible at this stage. Indeed, even if provision had been made in the legislation for a national system, the indications were that such legislation would have been in advance of public opinion, and unlikely to be acceptable to representatives of employers and workers. As has been seen, the 1930 Vocational Education Act and the 1931 Apprenticeship Act were intended to complement one another as far as apprenticeship was concerned. The continuation courses conducted by the VECs would provide suitably educated, mature and work-orientated young persons from whom employers could select apprentices at about sixteen years of age. The Apprenticeship Committees of the designated trades were intended to organise apprenticeship in respect of their trades in the work situation, specifying such matters as age of entry, educational entry qualifications, period of apprenticeship,

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numbers of apprentices, ratios of skilled men to apprentices, indentures and premiums, rates of pay, hours of work, and the training and education to be provided during apprenticeship. In relation to this latter aspect, the Apprenticeship Committees were obliged to submit their requirements to the Minister for Education, whose approval was necessary for the provision by the VECs of the training and education needed. Not only, then, was the educational sector interested in apprenticeship as employment opportunities for the pupils who had completed continuation courses, but it would look to the Apprenticeship Committees to provide information in relation to apprentice numbers in their designated trades in the local area, and the type of training and education recommended in order to plan and provide for such requirements. As already noted, there was provision in the Vocational Education Act for the VECs themselves, where trades were not designated and where Apprenticeship Committees under the 1931 Act had not been established, to provide courses suitable for apprentices in their own areas and to establish sub-committees, if necessary, to advise on this. The inter-connection between the two Acts was well summarised in the Report of the Department of Education for 1930-31:

The provisions of the Apprenticeship Act which has recently been passed by the Oireachtas are of much importance to VECs in city areas. The Act can accomplish much for the worker of the future, if employers and workers will co-operate to make it a success. There are ample provisions in the Vocational Education Act for the school training of the worker before he enters an occupation as well as during his apprenticeship, but the co-operation of trade organisations is required if the best results are to be secured. The Apprenticeship Act provides the machinery for the co-operation of the trades. Side by side the two measures should lead to a closer



connection between education and industry and to greater efficiency in both spheres of activity. (1)

Like Mr. McGilligan, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, who, in the debate on the Apprenticeship Bill in the Dail, had stated that the co-operation of employers was essential to the success of the Bill, the Department had identified what was to be the crucial factor in making the Apprenticeship Act work - co-operation between employers and workers.

In the last year of the operation of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act approximately 50,000 students from urban and rural areas were attending classes in 77 technical schools, and a further 20,000 were on special schemes for teaching the Irish language. There was, therefore, in operation at the time of the introduction of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, a vigorous and extensive technical instruction system, so that the change to one of wider scope and the introduction of the new concept of continuation education were facilitated. Admittedly, in the urban centres, schools with a commercial bias were proving more attractive than those with a trade orientation. However, there were in existence ten Day Trades Preparatory Schools in various centres which, in 1931, had enrolled 488 pupils. These, to a certain extent, provided the model on which the continuation scheme was to be based. In areas where they were in operation these courses had proved to be very acceptable to employers for recruiting apprentices and other young workers.

**Memorandum V.1. (1931) and Memorandum V.40. (1942):**

In order to get across the new concept of continuation education, the Department of Education, in 1931, issued a memorandum, Memorandum V.1.(2), to the 38 newly established

VECs, outlining what continuation education involved. It stated that the Day Trades Preparatory Schools provided 'typical continuation work', half the time being devoted to work of a practical nature such as woodwork, metalwork, practical science and drawing, and the other half to general subjects. Classes in general subjects were to be conducted so that they would be directly relevant to the future employment prospects of the pupils. Continuation courses were to be comprehensive and flexible, and directly related to employment opportunities for young people in the locality. The approach to teaching in them should differ radically from that in the primary or secondary schools, a suggestion which echoed a comment in the Ingram Report. In 1942 the Department issued a further memorandum, Memorandum V.40,(3) which 'set out the rationale of continuation education and more precise guidelines than those of 1931 for the guidance of vocational education committees'.(4) In relation to continuation courses in borough areas, the Memorandum advised that full specialisation was out of the question and recommended what it called 'group specialisation'. The following groups which had been developed in the system since the issuing of the 1931 Memorandum, viz. Junior Day Technical Course (Boys), Junior Day Technical Course (Girls), Day Commercial Course (Boys) and Day Commercial Course (Girls) were suggested as being appropriate, particularly for borough areas. These courses were of two years' duration. The first year courses had a good deal of common ground which would facilitate transfer in the second year to a more specialised curriculum, aimed at one of the occupations for which the course was designed. As a follow-on from this group specialisation approach, and in response to a demand from the Irish Technical Education Association, which, at its Congress in 1942, had set up a sub-committee to examine the question of examinations in the vocational education sector, the Day Group Certificate Examination was introduced by the Department in 1947.(5) Examinations were held and certificates awarded in

five subject groups. One of these, the Group Certificate in Manual Training was to become recognised as the most appropriate educational qualification for entry to apprenticeship, and was to become an obligatory entry qualification under the 1959 Apprenticeship Act and the 1967 Industrial Training Act, unless an exemption was granted.

Memorandum V.40 made a number of specific references to apprenticeship, including a suggestion that where rules for the enlistment of apprentices had been agreed, or where there was a reasonably steady demand for workers of a particular type, more specialised continuation courses might be organised. With regard to vocational guidance the Memorandum stated:

much may be done by vocational education committees working in co-operation with apprenticeship committees. Recent experience has shown that apprenticeship committees, whether statutory or voluntary, can give invaluable help to those in control of continuation schools by helping them to frame suitable courses in preparation for employment and also in arranging courses for those actually in employment.(6)

Another feature of Memorandum V.40., 'and a significant departure from the conception of the 1930 Act as enunciated by the Minister for Education of the previous government'(7), was the emphasis placed on religious studies and on the Irish language as part of the courses provided by the VECs.

#### **Experiments - Compulsory Attendance at Continuation Courses:**

An inter-departmental committee, chaired by Mr. John Ingram of the Department of Education, reported, in June 1935, on an inquiry it had carried out into the extension by Ministerial

Order (as provided for in the 1930 Act) of compulsory attendance at continuation courses for young persons between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years. This report led eventually to experiments in this connection in the cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford in the early 1940s.(8) While most of the pupils who attended these courses were messenger boys, the Department of Education Reports for the period record some apprentices as attending them as well. In summary therefore, continuation education, introduced by the 1930 Vocational Education Act, with its emphasis on work-related education for the fourteen to sixteen year olds, and with its concept of group specialisation leading to the introduction of the Group Certificate in Manual Training, was to become an important factor in pre-employment training and qualification for entry to apprenticeship.

**Technical Education for those in Employment:**

While the establishment and operation of the new system of continuation education was entirely within the control of the Department of Education and the VECs, the organisation of technical education for those in employment, either on the basis of evening classes, day release or, in some cases, block release, presented different and more difficult problems. The difficulties in getting apprentices, in sufficient numbers to maintain viable courses, to attend evening classes after a day's work, and particularly in the summer months, had already been highlighted in the Ingram Report, which maintained that any system of technical education based on voluntary attendance at evening classes was in serious jeopardy. Attendance at day classes on a voluntary basis depended on the goodwill and interest of employers, and indeed, in some cases, on the interest of apprentices themselves, even when they were released without loss of pay. In the case of many a small

employer, an apprentice represented possibly half his workforce and he could not afford to release him for classes. Again there was the difficulty of organising viable classes for the particular trades, and there was the question of distance between the school and the apprentice's workplace. The concept of block-release, release for periods of six to twelve weeks, and in some cases two years, applied in only a few cases, and mainly in the large semi-state bodies.

In spite of these difficulties, however, progress was being made. In its Report for 1927/28, the Department of Education gave details of the successful two year full-time courses in the City of Dublin Technical Instruction Scheme for the training of carpenters, plumbers, painters, bricklayers, printers, metal-plate workers, motor mechanics, electricians, brass finishers, cabinet makers and quantity surveyors. Courses for handicraft tailoring and watch and clock-making were also being organised. In Cork, the organisation of engineering classes was being improved and, with the co-operation of garage owners, a thriving day class for motor engineering apprentices was being conducted. In Limerick, technical classes were reported as showing great vitality and the school had gained a strong position in the life of the city. In Waterford, improvements were recorded in enrolment, attendance and in the type of student in the school.(9) The Report for 1928/29 gave details of medals awarded to students by the City and Guilds of London Institute, in 1929. In Dublin, a silver medal was awarded for electrical work, a bronze medal for typography and three bronze medals for tailor cutting. A bronze medal in motor car engineering was won by a student from the Crawford Institute in Cork.(10) In 1932/33, figures for the attendance of apprentices in Dublin at courses were: painting and decorating 35; carpentry and joinery 120; cabinet making 60; mechanical engineering 276; engineering workshop practice 100; motor car engineering 160, and an unspecified number attending

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bricklaying classes.(11) However, in the absence of any global figures for the numbers of apprentices in any particular trade, it is not possible to get a true indication of the level of penetration, at this stage, of apprentice education organised through the VEC system. An interesting development in 1930 was the award by the Department of a limited number of trade scholarships to enable selected apprentices, recommended by their employers, to undergo two year wholetime courses in the principles of science and art, as applied to their trades. In all, twenty scholarships were awarded, fifteen of which were in carpentry and joinery, two in painting and decorating, both courses conducted in Bolton Street, and three in electrical work, tenable in the Limerick Municipal Institute.(12) Apprentices were guaranteed re-employment at the end of these courses. Another innovation by the Department, recorded in its Report for 1931/32 under the heading New Industries, was outlined as follows:

The Department has, however, a scheme by which it is enabled to pay to any industry threequarters of the cost of training learners or apprentices in that industry. The training may be given in the factory premises and the Department is always prepared to assist in finding skilled instructors if the management of the factory is unable to find them. Generally speaking little advantage is taken of the scheme, though the Department has on many occasions brought it to the notice of interested persons.(13)

There was, therefore, the opportunity within the scope of the 1930 Act, and, within the Department and the VECs, the willingness, interest and flexibility to make adequate provision for the technical education of apprentices and the training in the technique of any trade if necessary - a facility excluded in previous Acts. However, in relation to the overall demands of the apprenticeship system, the educational

sector was, to a large extent, working in the dark. It was not in a position to organise apprenticeship in the workplace, it did not know the numbers of apprentices to be provided for in particular trades, their location, nor their specific requirements as regards education or training. In economic terms, the demand in relation to numbers and requirements needed to be quantified, and a system put in place to bring all apprentices to the classroom. The Apprenticeship Act, 1931, with its provisions for the designation of trades, the establishment of Apprenticeship Committees and the making of apprenticeship rules was the instrument designed to close the gap. However, as early as 1932, the Department of Education was beginning to have doubts about the commitment of industry to the Apprenticeship Act, as its Report for 1931/32 indicates:

every effort must be made to obtain and retain the interest of Employers and Trade Organisations in the activities of the schools. A great deal has been done in establishing definite connections during the past year; examples can be given in the gas fitting, bootmaking, textiles and other trades but there will have to be general acceptance of certain principles before the best progress can be secured in Technical Education in the country. The trades must agree to compulsory attendance of apprentices at classes; they must be prepared to require apprentices to attend for a stated period as a fundamental condition of continuance of apprenticeship; all apprentices in any locality must attend; there must be no loopholes in regard to apprentices in this firm or that; the efficiency and progress of apprentices must be tested from time to time. All this and much more can be achieved through the machinery of the Apprenticeship Act, but so far there has been no movement of Trade interests to use the provisions of the Act. Something can be done here and there by individuals, individual committees or individual

trade organisations to establish a desirable connection between Education and Industry but no general steps have yet been taken and until they are progress will be slow and sporadic.(14)

**Initiatives Taken by Department of Industry and Commerce:**

In fact steps were being taken in the Department of Industry and Commerce to bring the provisions of the Apprenticeship Act into operation. One of the criticisms of the Bill in its passage through the Oireachtas was that any initiatives to get trades designated had to originate with employers or employees, and that this would inhibit any action being taken. However, as early as June 1932, the Department of Industry and Commerce had begun conferences with employers and employees in no fewer than fourteen trades, eight of which were 'trade board trades' and six 'non-trade board trades'. The trade board trades were Paper Box, Tailoring, Brush and Broom Making, Sugar Confectionery, Tobacco, Shirtmaking, Boot and Shoe Repairing and Womens Clothing and Millinery. The non-trade board trades were Furniture, Hairdressing, Building, Bakery, Engineering and Printing. However, as Building, Engineering and Printing each consisted of a number of distinct trades or crafts, these three categories would have represented quite a number of individual trades. For example, the Building Trade group would have included carpenters and joiners, bricklayers, painters and decorators, plumbers and plasterers among others. The Department of Industry and Commerce, then, had initiated quite an extensive programme for the designation of trades and the establishment of statutory apprenticeship committees within a year of the passing of the Act. The concept of dealing with trade groups rather than individual trades in Building, Engineering and Printing would have the advantage of rationalising apprenticeship rules and regulations among allied



trades and, in addition, would considerably reduce the number of rules and regulations and, consequently, the administrative work and bureaucracy. The conferences with representatives of employers and employees were part of the consultative process at which the objectives and the operation of the Apprenticeship Act were outlined, and the procedures for the designation of trades and the establishment of Apprenticeship Committees were explained. Separate side conferences with employees only and employers only were generally held before the joint meeting. One of the first requirements in the designation of a trade was the drafting of a Special Order defining precisely the nature of the activities which comprised each trade. The initial drafts of these were prepared in the Department of Industry and Commerce, generally with the assistance of the trade teachers in the Dublin School of Trades. Following the joint conferences, the employer and employee representatives were written to for their views on the question of designation and for their comments on the draft definitions of their particular trades. Where both parties agreed that their trade should be designated, and were satisfied with the draft of what constituted their trade, the procedure set out in the Apprenticeship Act for the designation of a trade was put in train. This was initiated by the publication in the press of a Notice of Intention to make a Special Order for the designation of a particular trade, and the preparation of a draft Special Order, a procedure that was both cumbersome and time consuming.

Following the consultative processes referred to above and the request for views and comments, the position of the fourteen trades concerned was summarised in the form of a handwritten table dated 20th November, 1933. It was headed Apprenticeship Act 1931, Present position with regard to trades which it is intended to be 'designated' for the purposes of the Act.(15) In the case of Furniture and Hairdressing, agreement had been reached, and the Notice of Intention to make a Special Order

and the draft Special Order had been prepared and were being processed through the administrative system. In the case of the Building Trade group, the position was that the employers were mainly in favour of the provisions of the Act being applied to their industry but the workers were against it. In the case of the Bakery trade it was reported that the trade 'seems to be in favour' of the Act. However, of the three unions involved two were in favour and one against, whereas in the case of the employers who had replied, four were in favour and two against. Endeavours were still being made to get replies from the Limerick and the Waterford Master Bakers Associations, despite the fact that many reminders had been issued. In the case of the Engineering trade group, all of the unions were in favour of the Act, but of the three employer organisations which were approached, only one was in favour. The union side in the Printing trade group had not yet replied to the Department's letter, and were having difficulty in drafting a definition of what constituted the trade of printer. Of the three employer bodies in the Printing industry, no reply had been received from the Dublin Newspapers' Management Committee, the Dublin Master Printers Association had submitted a definition of the trade but were not in favour of the Act, while the Irish Master Printers Association would take no action until the Department first consulted the Typographical Association based in Manchester. This summarised the position in relation to the non-trade board trades. In the case of the eight trade board trades the intention in the Act was to extend the existing functions of the relevant trade boards for the purposes of the Apprenticeship Act. With this in mind, the eight trade boards were written to by the Department of Industry and Commerce, asking if they would agree to the extension of their functions. The Paper Box trade and the Tailoring trade signified their agreement, but in the case of Brush and Broom, Sugar Confectionery, Tobacco, Shirtmaking, Boot and Shoe Repairing and Womens Clothing and Millinery, the Boards were in the

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process of being re-constituted. In the case of the Brush and Broom trade, however, both employers and employees had already been consulted, evidently with satisfactory results.

In selecting these fourteen trades for designation for apprenticeship purposes, the Department adopted the line of endeavouring to have designated firstly industries which already had good systems of apprenticeship. 'We thought these would likely be a model for such other industries as either had poor or no systems of apprenticeship.'(16) The Department was, therefore, very concerned with the attitude of the unions in the Building Trade to the concept of designation and considered it 'an unexpected development' which might be accounted for by difficulties on the part of the workers in interpreting Acts of Parliament, and their lack of knowledge of the benefits to workers under the Act. In fact, in their opposition to the Act, the unions in the Building Trade presented a united front and organised conferences of their members in the various cities, and passed a standard resolution opposing the implementation of the Act. The result was conveyed in a letter to the Department as a decision dated 7th. July, 1933:

That having considered the question of the application of the Apprenticeship Act to the Building Industry, I am instructed to inform you that after due consideration by a joint conference representative of every branch of the industry, it was unanimously decided not to accept the proposal.(17)

The reasons for the attitude adopted by the unions in the Building Trade to designation were summarised by the Department in an internal minute, in October 1933:

It is the general opinion of the workers that the Rules of Apprenticeship which have been set up in most trades by

agreement between employers and workers afford the latter sufficient protection and for this reason they are, no doubt, reluctant to agree to any legislation which might have the effect of disturbing agreements already made with employers.(18)

The 'Rules of Apprenticeship' referred, presumably, to individual agreements on apprenticeship matters between the unions concerned and their respective employer bodies.

The unexpected development in regard to the Building Trade unions seems to have had an inhibiting effect on the policy of the Department. It was accepted that without the co-operation of the workers, the administration of the Act would be impossible, and unless the objections were withdrawn, it would be futile to designate the Building Trade. A proposal was made that the position should be discussed with the Trade Union Congress, which had initially sponsored the Apprenticeship Bill, but this suggestion was deferred pending an overall review of developments in relation to the designation of trades other than those in the Building Industry. Having received the review requested, the Assistant Secretary of the Department in a minute dated 2nd. January 1934, set out the policy as follows:

As soon as practicable and preferably immediately, we should press on with our negotiations in respect of the various trades to which the Apprenticeship Act is to be applied. Even in cases where objections are being made by one or other of the parties, I think it would be the Minister's wish to proceed in any event. Everything should be got ready for designating the trades, and the Minister can in each case decide, in view of whatever opposition there is whether he wishes to proceed or not.(19)

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**The First Designations:**

Agreement having been reached, in 1933, between employers and trade unions in the Hairdressing and Furniture trades, the administrative process in relation to these two trades was put in train. In 1934, both were designated, Hairdressing being the first trade on the statute book. Designation in each case was in respect of the Dublin District only, using Special Orders numbers 195 and 271 of 1934.(20)

On the other hand, by April 1934, efforts to proceed in respect of the Building, Engineering and Printing trades had 'reached deadlock point', with the unions opposed to designation in the Building trades, and the employer organisations opposed to it in the Engineering and Printing trades. At this stage, the official handling the matter in the Department was seeking a decision as to whether or not particular trades within the industries could be designated, rather than the industry as a whole.(21) In the meantime, the President of the Irish National and United House and Ship Painters Society had approached the Department with a view to having Painting and Decorating designated as a trade, and was informed that 'it was possible that the Act would be applied to the various constituent trades in the Building Trade separately, as the Department had now come to the conclusion that it would be the more practicable course'. The usual administrative process was put in train, with a draft definition of what constituted the trade of Painter and Decorator being prepared in the Department and submitted to the employer organisations, and to the unions, for their comments and their general views on the designation of the trade. By 23rd March 1934, the Department was able to record:

Replies have now been received from the various organisations which were asked for observations as to the

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suitability of the proposed definition of the House Painting and Decorating Trade ..... a few minor amendments have been suggested and all parties are willing to co-operate. The way is now open for the proposed conference.(23)

It appears that the trade unions involved at this stage chose to ignore the resolution of the Building Industry unions passed in July, 1933. A conference involving both the employers and the unions in the Painting and Decorating trade was held in the Department of Industry and Commerce on 11th. April 1935, with the usual separate side conferences. The result was that the Department was satisfied that there was sufficient common ground between the parties to proceed with designation. There was, however, a last minute hitch, when a resolution passed by the Association of Master Painters and Decorators was forwarded to the Department on 21st. May 1935, which read:

Resolved:- That we consider that owing to the nature of the Painting trade which is not carried out in a workshops but in private and public buildings throughout the country, the application of the Apprenticeship Act should be postponed until such time as experience of its successful working has been gained in other trades which are more easily regulated.(24)

In spite of this resolution, the Minister gave his approval for the designation of the trade and the Special Order No.566 of 1935, and the District Order, No. 567 of 1935, were made. Unlike the Hairdressing and Furniture trades, the District Order in this case applied to the whole of Saorstát Eireann. An interesting anecdote in connection with the conference in the Department of Industry and Commerce on the 11th. April 1935, which gives an idea of the employment situation in the country at the time, concerns the Secretary of the Tralee Society of

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Painters, who was invited to attend. He wrote to the effect that he could not afford to attend, but stated that, as far as Tralee was concerned, the trade was closed to apprentices. The old rule was one apprentice to four men constantly employed, but within the preceding two years a new rule had been passed debarring apprentices from coming into the trade because of the decline in the amount of work, and his letter went on:

The causes of this are ..... the loss of the Big Houses throughout the County owned by the Gentleman Class and the great curse of Handymanism.(25)

#### **Reservations on the Apprenticeship Act:**

An application in March 1936, from the Executive Representative, Plumbers, Glaziers and Domestic Engineers Trade in Limerick, to become a designated trade under the Apprenticeship Act, in respect of all members in Saorstát Eireann, illustrates the particular difficulties faced by the Department, and also serves to give an indication of the Department's own views on the effectiveness of the 1931 Act. The application triggered the usual action within the Department: the drawing up of a draft definition of the trade; identification of the trade unions and employer organisations involved in the trade and writing to these seeking their views on designation and comments on the draft definition. A reply was received from the Secretary, Irish Engineering and Foundry Union, stating that his union was 'at a loss to know what is the exact meaning of Plumbing, Glazing and Domestic Engineering', and that his union catered for all Domestic Heating and Ventilating Engineers in Dublin. The Department discovered that there was, in fact, an inter-union dispute between the two unions in relation to the control of domestic heating work, and it was suggested that the purpose of the

Limerick application was to endeavour to secure statutory inclusion of heating operations in the definition of the plumbing trade for 'alien purposes'. The Department recognised that there was little hope of getting any agreed definition of the trade, and the issue was deferred on a three-monthly basis over the years, to see if the inter-union dispute would be resolved. The Department's position was summed up in the following extract from a minute dated 10th. October, 1938:

My inclination would be to keep as clear as possible from inter-union disputes, particularly as in the present case, we are under no particular pressure to take action. Further my recommendation in favour of inaction in this particular case was largely influenced by the uncertainty of the position in regard to the future of the Apprenticeship Act.(26)

What exactly was meant by the last sentence is not clear, but coupled with the fact that no new initiatives to designate trades other than the fourteen which were proposed in 1933, and with other references in the file, it could reasonably be inferred that the Department had, by this stage, come to the conclusion that the Act was defective. In June 1940, four years after its initial application, the Limerick union once again enquired as to the position. By this stage the whole question had been shelved on the grounds of the fundamental difficulty of getting an agreed definition of the trade, due to the long drawn out inter-union dispute, and the Departmental minute shrewdly commented: 'Any definition would probably bring both unions on the Committee which would become a further area for inter-union struggle'.(27) The issue was effectively closed when the Department wrote to the Limerick union stating that:

in the conditions of the present emergency, the Minister feels that it is not possible to proceed with the



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designation of any trade and that consideration of the application referred to must be deferred for the present.(28)

The Brush and Broom Trade was designated by Special Order No. 36 of 1935, its Apprenticeship District Order, No. 37 of 1935, specifying Saorstát Éireann as the relevant district. The Boot and Shoe Repairing Trade was designated in 1939, the relevant Orders being 153 and 154 of 1939. (29) These two trades were the only 'trade board trades' to be designated under the 1931 Apprenticeship Act. In 1936, the Furniture Trade was designated for the remainder of the Saorstát, outside the previously designated Dublin District, by Orders 292 and 293 of 1936. The Hairdressing Trade was designated for the Cork District by Orders 249 and 248 of 1945.(30)

#### **Apprenticeship Committees and the Making of Rules:**

Following the designation of trades in respect of specified districts, the next step was to establish representative apprenticeship committees for each trade and its district. The Committee normally consisted of a Chairman and two appointed members nominated by the Minister for Industry and Commerce, and eight members each, nominated by employer bodies and by trade unions. A secretarial service was provided by the Department, and it was usual to have an inspector from the Department of Education to advise on educational matters. The Committee then proceeded to make Apprenticeship Rules for its trade and district, some of which were mandatory and others discretionary. Rules approved by each Committee were forwarded to the Minister for Industry and Commerce, checked if required by the Attorney-General, and if in order, confirmed by the Minister by means of a Confirmation Order. In the case of the first trade to be designated under the Act, the Hairdressing

Trade (Dublin District) in 1934, the first Rules were not confirmed until 1936. As new Rules were made, amended or added to, the process of confirmation by the Minister had to be gone through again. In the case of Hairdressing, in Dublin, for example, separate Confirmation Orders were made in respect of Rules in 1936, 1938, 1942, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1948, 1952, 1956, 1958, 1960 and 1962. The last two are of interest in that they were 'enabled' under the 1931 Act after that Act had been repealed by the Apprenticeship Act of 1959. In the case of the Furniture trade, sixteen Confirmation Orders were made in the period 1938 to 1961. In the revision of one particular set of Rules in the House Painting and Decorating Trade, a period of four years had elapsed between the time the draft was sent to the Minister for confirmation and the time they were returned to the Committee with the comments of the Attorney-General. It was to take another two years before they were confirmed.(31) A similar delay is recorded in respect of the Apprenticeship Committee for the Furniture Trade (No.2, outside Dublin). The first meeting of the Committee was held in 1939 and the next was not held until 1946, when the meeting was 'occupied mainly with the confirmation and amendment of the rules formulated at the first meeting in 1939'.(32) All the trades designated under the 1931 Act, with the exception of the Boot and Shoe Repairing Trade, had made Rules which had been confirmed by the Minister for Industry and Commerce. As the Orders for the Boot and Shoe Repairing Trade had not been made until 1939, the likelihood is that any further action was deferred until the end of the Emergency, due to other pressures on the Department. By then, it probably had been decided that the 1931 Act should be replaced by new legislation, and the matter was not revived.

Each Committee was mandated to make Rules specifying those who were to be regarded as apprentices,(normally done by reference to the definition of the trade contained in the Special Order designating it), fixing the period of apprenticeship and the

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probationary period, setting the minimum rates of pay and fixing the maximum hours of work. Each Committee could also, at its discretion, make Rules dealing with educational entry qualifications, age of entry to apprenticeship, training rules, the number of apprentices to be employed, apprentice premiums and minimum rates of overtime wages. In relation to the four trades for which Confirmation of Rules Orders had been made by the Minister, the following summarises the Rules position at the beginning of 1943:

Hairdressing Trade (Dublin):

Age of Entry:	Between 16 and 21 years.
Period of Apprenticeship:	4 years for either ladies or gents end*, 5 years for both.
	* end = type of business.
Educational Entry:	700 hours instruction per school year at a vocational, secondary or national school for those who have not been employed between 14 and 16, and 180 hours per school year at a vocational school for those who have been employed between these ages.
Training:	Not specified.

Furniture Trade (Dublin):

Age of Entry:	Not prescribed.
Period of Apprenticeship:	6 years for male and 4 years for female apps.
Educational Entry:	Male apps. must have 1 year at Junior Day Tech. School female apps. 1 year at Junior Day Domestic course.
Training:	Not specified.

House Painting/Decorating(S.E):

Age of Entry:	Not prescribed.
Period of Apprenticeship:	6 years.
Educational Entry:	1 year in class equivalent to 6th. standard and regular attendance at an approved course between the ages of 14 and 16 years. The approved course will contain not less than 750 hours in each school year.
Training:	In 1st. year app. shall work in the presence of a journeyman, employer to ensure app. is instructed and trained. Compulsory Day Courses during working

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hours for 3 hours per day  
2 days per week, years 1&2.

Brush and Broom Trade(S.E):

Age of Entry: Not prescribed.

Period of Apprenticeship: Male app. 5 years. female  
3 years.

Educational Entry: None prescribed.

Training: Not specified.

The above information, other than that referring to training, was contained in a memorandum dated 8th. January, 1943, in the Department of Industry and Commerce file, Department of Education Post War Policy on Apprenticeship.(33) The information on Training Rules was obtained from an examination of the Rules.

It would be superfluous to give details of all the Rules that were made by these four trades. They are to be found in the various Confirmation of Rules Orders made under the 1931 Apprenticeship Act and listed in the Guide to the Statutory Instruments.(34) These Orders can be obtained through the Government Publications Office. Suffice it to say that some of the Rules, particularly those applying to rates of pay, hours of work and ratios of craftsmen to apprentices, are very involved, especially in those trades for which the designated district was Saorstát Éireann. Different rates and ratios applied in different districts depending on local employer/employee agreements. Much of the time of the Committees must have been devoted to consultation on these

matters. It was one of the areas which tended to make the 1931 Act unworkable. In the case of many of Confirmation of Rules Orders, the bulk of the Order was devoted to rules in relation to pay and the ratio of craftsmen to apprentices and very little to matters affecting training.

**Reasons for Lack of Progress with the Apprenticeship Act:**

It is reasonable to ask at this stage why it was that an Apprenticeship Act which was recommended by the Commission on Technical Education, which had been welcomed by all sides on its introduction in the Dail, and which had been promoted by the Trade Union Congress, had in fact made so little progress. Only four Apprenticeship Committees had been set up and there was little or no penetration outside the city and county of Dublin. It has been noted that as the Bill finished its passage through the Oireachtas, representatives on all sides were beginning to have serious doubts as to its workability, particularly as there was no overall controlling authority (other than a Government department). Doubts had also been expressed in relation to its voluntary nature and the penal sanctions provided for in the Bill. Essentially the problem was that the ability of employers and employees, through their respective organisations, to co-operate willingly and effectively in the operation of the Act, did not develop. Added to this, the Minister did not have the powers or the structure, in the mode of an overseeing body, to compel or promote co-operation in the interests of the apprentice. Furthermore, as had been forecast by Sean Lemass in the Dail debate, whereas there was a willingness on the part of the Government to apply the legal powers in the Act against employers, it was not the policy to apply them against the trade unions. In this connection, the following statements in

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a letter dated 25th. June 1944, from the Department of Industry and Commerce to Mr. John Ingram of the Department of Education, erstwhile Chairman of the Commission on Technical Education, are revealing:

I am afraid it would be impossible and possibly contrary to policy to advocate an Act which would make apprenticeship conditions binding on labour.

and

I cannot visualise an amending Act which would make the Committee's Rules binding on workers as the effect of such an Act would be to prohibit stoppages of work owing to the refusal of Unions to comply with Rules passed by the Committee.(35)

The Department's own assessment of the position was that the unions were reasonably well satisfied with the agreements between themselves and their employers on apprenticeship matters, reached in the context of industrial relations bargaining, and were reluctant to become involved in legislation which might disturb those agreements. Unions have never been enamoured of a legislative approach to solving problems at shop floor level as it tended to be a long drawn-out and costly process; such matters were best resolved by across the table talks, while the threat of industrial action was very effective in getting such talks underway quickly. Another aspect was that some unions considered that apprenticeship was no concern of the employers at all but purely a matter for the unions. This, possibly, was a throw-back to the concept of the 'apprenticeship to the trade' which developed in the latter part of the 19th. century. There was also a certain amount of rivalry between unions catering for the same category of worker, and union solidarity was not as

effective as it is today. In many cases, also, particularly outside the major cities, workers were not properly organised and any structures that existed were haphazard. The local trade union secretary was usually a working tradesman who had to earn his living, while working unpaid in his spare time for his members. Like the Secretary of the Tralee Society of Painters, he could not afford the expense of travelling, attending meetings and losing his day's pay as a result. Initially there was no provision for the payment of expenses, including loss of earnings, though this was changed later.

The employers, on the other hand, saw themselves in a no-win situation. Why should they become involved in statutory committees and agree to rules for the transgression of which they could be prosecuted and fined? They were also quite well aware that, whereas the legislation would be applied to them, it would not be used against the unions, which would, in any case, continue to use their own traditional sanctions. It would seem better, therefore, for employers to steer clear of statutory committees and, where they considered that structures were needed, to set up voluntary ones which would not involve them in legislation.

As for the Department of Industry and Commerce, the body responsible for overseeing and promoting the Act, it never really recovered from the reaction of the unions in the Building Trade, and the employer organisations in the Engineering and Printing Industries, to its original initiatives in 1933. In addition, there was a staffing problem, with apprenticeship work initially being part of the general work of the Department (an Office of Apprenticeship Committees was later established). The amount of administrative work involved in drafting the rules for the Committees had probably been grossly underestimated. The Commission on Vocational Organisation in its Report states in this connection:



The reasons given for the small number of statutory apprenticeship committees are, first, that in many trades employers and workers are not organised and secondly, that the rules of these committees must be so framed that they can be interpreted and applied by the courts. This leaves them so rigid as to hamper the committees excessively.(36)

The four years delay, attributed to the Attorney-General's office, in dealing with the revision of the Rules for the House Painting and Decorating Trade in the period between the meeting of the Committee held on 24th. November, 1950 and the next meeting held on 24th. November 1954, illustrates the point.(37) It is also worth noting that in the period 1934 to 1962, no fewer than 59 Statutory Instruments had to be prepared and processed for the very few trades that were designated. It would appear that by 1938, if not before, the Department of Industry and Commerce was beginning to question the future of the Apprenticeship Act. The onset of the Emergency in 1939, created other priorities for the Department and apprenticeship matters were given a low rating. In 1941, by Emergency Powers [83] Order - a wages standstill order - Apprenticeship Committees were prohibited from making rules in relation to the minimum rates of wages or of overtime pay for apprentices, and this further curtailed the activities of the Committees. Apprenticeship did not appear to have a very high profile, either, among the legislators, as in the period, March 1935, to February 1939, only four Parliamentary Questions were put down for answer by the Minister for Industry and Commerce, all by Labour deputies. The questions related to the establishment of further apprenticeship committees, and the answers given, as usual, provided only the very minimum of information. The reply on 17th. November 1937, to the question put down by Deputy James Patterson was 'No Trade Boards or Apprenticeship Committees have been established during the past 12 months'.(38)

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**Impact on the Training and Education of Apprentices:**

It is difficult to assess the impact of the Act on the training and education of apprentices in the four trades for which Apprenticeship Rules were made in the absence of relevant records. One of the trades, that of Brush and Broom, could hardly be regarded as a trade in the accepted sense. It was an operative type occupation carried out under factory conditions with very little skill requirements. In its Rules it specified no educational entry qualifications and provided that all training should take place in the workshop. In the section dealing with Apprenticeship, in Irish Education: History and Structure, the overall impact of the 1931 Act is summarised as follows: 'In the event most trades did not adopt the provisions and the Act accomplished little'.(39) In 1943, in its Report, the Commission on Vocational Organisation stated:

From the evidence received by the Commission it appears that the Apprenticeship Act 1931 has not been worked with success.(40)

The Commission on Youth Unemployment, established in 1943 by Sean Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce, but which did not submit its Report until 1951, commented: 'The Act has, we understand, been found by experience to be difficult to operate successfully - only four trades are working it', and suggested that the reason for its lack of success 'may be in its permissive character'.(41) A Memorandum, prepared by the Department of Industry and Commerce as a briefing document for the Government in relation to the proposed 1959 Apprenticeship Act, states that little use had been made of the facilities offered by the 1931 Act, that the apprenticeship schemes operating under it were not good schemes and that 'the Act under which they have been drawn up is in itself defective'. The Memorandum goes on:

the Act makes it obligatory on Apprenticeship Committees to make rules governing wages and hours of work, which matters should be properly dealt with by collective agreements, with if necessary the assistance of the Labour Court. As matters stand, the Committees tend to become pre-occupied with questions of wages and hours of work.(42)

Because of incomplete statistics it is extremely difficult to quantify what was achieved by the 1931 Act. The Department of Industry and Commerce in 1958, in its Memorandum for Government, estimated that the four trades which were designated employed about 1,200 apprentices.(43) What proportion this was of the entire population of apprentices in the country is not known, but eight years later, in 1966, An Cheard Chomhairle recorded a total of 10,192 registered apprentices in the five trade groups of Furniture, Electrical, Motor, Engineering and Construction.(44) Although minutes of meetings for the four designated trades were prepared and circulated, the official records of these have not been located. It is known that they were transferred from the Department of Industry and Commerce to An Cheard Chomhairle when that body was established. Registers of apprentices in the designated trades were maintained by the Department, and these also have yet to be located.(45)

Some copies of minutes of meetings are available among trade union records in the National Archives. In the case of the House Painting and Decorating Trade, nineteen meetings of the Committee were held in the period 1935 to 1954, an average of one per year.(46) Department of Education Reports for the period make references to the infrequency of meetings held by some Committees, particularly from 1947 to 1950. The Report for 1947/48, states that no meeting of the Furniture (No. 2) Committee was held nor was there any reference to a meeting of

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the Brush and Broom Committee in that year. Neither had the Brush and Broom nor the House Painting and Decorating Committees met during 1946/47.(47) In a reference to the Brush and Broom Committee, which held four meetings in the school year 1950/51, the Department of Education Report states: 'The meetings were devoted largely to the consideration of wage adjustments, conditions of employment and ratios of apprentices'.(48)

Any attempt to quantify the impact of the 1931 Act is also affected by the fact that, in addition to the operations of the four designated trade Committees, chief executive officers, school principals and individual trade teachers were, under the provisions of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, organising apprentice classes, both on day-release and evening class basis, on their own initiatives, through contacts with local employers and industries, for apprentices and in districts outside the scope of the designation orders. As well, a number of very successful apprentice schemes were operated by voluntary committees of employers and trade unions, in association with VECs, an example of which was that for the Printing trade in Dublin. There were also several excellent special apprentice schemes organised by large employers, particularly State and semi-State bodies, again in conjunction with VECs. These will be dealt with, later, in a separate section but they included the Army Air Corps, Irish Sugar Company, Guinness, ESB, P&T, Society of the Irish Motor Traders, Bord na Mona, Cork Dockyard, GNR, CIE, the Army Apprentice School at Naas, Aer Lingus, Waterford Glass and the Dublin Gas Co. Some of these schemes operated in locations outside the main cities. They were all very successful and showed what could be achieved when apprenticeship training had the support and commitment of employers.

**Apprenticeship Statistics:**

At first statistics in relation to attendances of apprentices at classes organised by the VECs tended to be meagre, though they improved later. A detailed breakdown for particular trades is not available for the period in question, nor is there a consistent distinction made between day and evening attendances. However, some idea of the numbers involved and the progress made can be got from an examination of the Department of Education Reports for the period. The 1932/33 Report shows a combined attendance of 1,308 apprentices at trade classes in 20 different trades in the Dublin VEC area. It is not specified whether these were day or evening attendances, but it is most likely that the majority of them were the latter. Of the trades later designated, no Hairdressing or Brush and Broom apprentices are included in the figures, but 35 painting and decorating and 30 woodcutting machinist apprentices are recorded. No figures are provided for the rest of the country. In the 1952/53 Report, twenty years later, 2,847 apprentices were attending day release courses in 25 centres throughout the country. Of these, 1,640 attended in Dublin, 115 in Cork, 228 in Drogheda, 70 in Clonmel and the lowest number, 3, in Roscommon. No breakdown by trades is given. Tables in the Reports for 1957/58 and 1959/60 show nationwide apprentice attendance at day and block release courses in previous years as follows;

1953/54	2267	1957/58	2538
1954/55	2410	1958/59	2761
1955/56	2527	1959/60	2787
1956/57	2630		

A note in the 1959/60 Report in relation to these figures says that 'the increases recorded in recent years took place entirely in country areas'. The 1932/33 and the 1959/60 figures are not comparable as the latter did not include evening attendances which the former almost certainly did. In the absence of national apprentice population figures for the period up to 1960, it is really not possible to draw valid conclusions from these figures. Five years later, however, in 1965/66, An Cheard Chomhairle had increased class attendances to 5,943, from a population of 10,000 registered apprentices, and by 1980/81 under AnCO, the number had increased to over 14,000 apprentices attending day and block release from a population of almost 19,500 registered apprentices. It could be argued, on the basis of the estimated 1,200 apprentices in the four designated trades, in 1958, (Department of Industry and Commerce Memo), - given that the average period of apprenticeship was six years and that apprentices attended day release classes in their first two years - that the annual attendance attributable to the designated trades would only be of the order of 400 apprentices. It could be assumed that many of these would have been enrolled by the VECs in the absence of the 1931 Act. Overall, therefore, the impact of the Act on the technical training and education of apprentices could not be regarded as significant. A far greater impact was made by the non-statutory and voluntary activities of the VECs in co-operation with employers and trade unions.

The occupational tables in the 1951 Census of Population for Ireland did not provide information on apprentice numbers. However, the 1961 and 1966 Censuses did give figures for 'apprentices and learners' categorised as male and female. In the 1961 Census returns, the total figure, over 14 years of age, for this category was 22,476 (15,232 male, 7,244 female) representing 2.03% of all those gainfully employed which was 1,108,108. The 1966 Census figures, again for 'apprentices and

learners', were 28,253 (20,795 male, 7,458 female) with 1,118,204 gainfully employed, the percentage this time being 2.53%. Applying the average of these two percentage figures, 2.28%, to the numbers shown as gainfully employed in the 1951 Census, viz. 1,272,038, suggests that the number of 'apprentices and learners', in 1951, was of the order of 29,000. Allowing for the fact that Census figures included apprentices and learners, the estimated number of apprentices covered by the four designated trades, 1,200, and the total numbers, (designated and undesignated), attending educational release courses, 2267 in 1953/54, were not significant in the context of these estimated total figures.

#### **The Hairdressing Committees:**

Of the four trades for which Apprenticeship Committees were established, the most effective would appear to have been the Hairdressing Committee for the Dublin District. Meetings were held fairly regularly, rules were updated about every two years, even during the war years, up to and including 1962. Classes were organised for its apprentices, initially in Kevin Street College in September 1938, and later in Capel Street Technical School. Attendance orders, made at the Committee meetings, were served on apprentices and employers, the maximum being 65, in 1951/52. The members of the trade took a keen interest in the work of the classes, through the School Advisory Committee. Apprentices sat for the Department's Junior Trade Certificate in Hairdressers' Work and prizes were presented by employers and trade unions for competition among the apprentices. In its Report for 1951/52, the Department, referring to the Furniture Trade, commented:

It is to be regretted that employers generally do not take a more active interest in the work of the courses and in

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the progress of the apprentices at school. The position here is in striking contrast with employers in the Hairdressing Trade, who keep in close contact with the work being done and take an active interest in the pupils' progress.(49)

The main Committee had also appointed a sub-committee which did much of the detailed work, including the investigation of disputes between apprentices and employers. In relation to Hairdressing in the Cork area, which was designated in 1945 and had Rules confirmed in 1946, a meeting was held in 1950 to consider the question of further Rules but it was not until 1955 that the new Rules were confirmed by the Minister.

#### **The Brush and Broom Committee:**

At the other end of the scale was the Brush and Broom Committee which seems to have met infrequently, and when it did, was concerned mainly with wages, hours of work and ratios. It made its first Rules in 1937 and the next set in 1953. It laid down no educational qualifications for entry to apprenticeship, no educational release was specified on the basis that all training could take place in the workshop. In the 1951/52 period, there were two meetings of the Committee which were devoted mainly 'to discussion of the proposed amendments of the ratio rule, but, in view of the slackness in the trade, adoption of the amendments was postponed'.(50) Whatever impact this Committee had on the conditions of employment of its apprentices in the workplace, it would seem that their education and training was given a very low priority.



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**The Painting and Decorating Committee:**

While the Hairdressing Trade was initially designated for the Dublin District and, therefore, had a fairly manageable area and apprentice complement, the House Painting and Decorating Trade was designated for the whole of Saorstát Éireann. This presented particular difficulties, not only because of the absence of national structures and communications difficulties, but, in particular, in the framing of Rules as regards wages and ratios of craftsmen to apprentices. For example, when the Committee set out to revise its Rules in 1950, (and it was to be 1956 before the revised Rules were confirmed), the proposed amendment to the Rules Regulating the Number of Apprentices to be Employed, the ratio Rule, specified no fewer than twenty-five different locations, in some of which the ratio was four craftsmen to one apprentice and in the others three to one. In Cork city, for instance, the four to one ratio applied, while in Cork county it was three to one. The Committee was also in trouble with the Attorney-General and the Chief State Solicitor, in respect of the framing of its ratio Rule, as a situation could arise where a father could be prohibited from taking his son as an apprentice. The Chief State Solicitor gave it as his opinion that he would probably be unable to bring a successful prosecution on the basis of the proposed draft.(51) The Minutes of the same meeting summarised the views of the Committee's Chairman on the 1931 Act as follows:

The Chairman said that the Committee should remember that in framing the Apprenticeship Act, the Parliamentary Draughtsman broke fresh ground and that he had no background of similar legislation to guide him. The many gaps and loopholes since discovered in the Act had been brought to the notice of the Minister from time to time and these would no doubt be rectified when an amended Act was put before the legislature.(52)

At the 20th. meeting of the Committee, when the definition of an employer was being debated, the Chairman reminded the members that the purpose of defining 'employer' was to restrict apprentices as far as possible to legitimate painting contractors, and 'to deter such bodies as C.I.E., the Dublin Corporation and large industrial concerns from taking apprentices', as it was generally agreed that they did not get suitable general training with such bodies.(53) At the previous meeting, the Committee had decided to protest to the Minister for Industry and Commerce about the lack of enforcement of the Act, and requested that inspectors should be assigned exclusively to that work. In the Department of Education Report for 1932/33, in Return 1[a], a total of 153 'students' are shown as attending Painting and Decorating classes organised by VECs in the cities and towns, 117 of whom were in Dublin, 12 in Cork and one each in Sligo, Tralee and Wexford. It is not specified, however, if all of those were apprentices or whether the classes were day or evening ones, but the likelihood is that they were the latter.(54) In the same year, 35 apprentices to the trade were attending classes in Bolton Street Technical School. By 1937, a sub-committee of the main Committee had discussed arrangements for the education and training of apprentices and, by July 1938, the general Rules dealing with the trade had been confirmed by the Minister. By January 1939, Rules Regulating the Training of Apprentices had been drafted and arrangements were being made to have day courses in The Theory and Practice of the House Painting and Decorating Trade organised in technical schools 'on the lines of the present course at Bolton Street Technical Schools'.(55) These day courses were to be set up in any town or city where six or more apprentices were available for instruction. In subsequent years, Committee activity seems to have been very much reduced and, in a number of years, no meetings took place including the four year period from 1950 to 1954.

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**The Furniture Trade Committees:**

The Furniture Trade established two Committees, No.1, dealing with the Dublin District and No.2, dealing with the rest of the country. As was to be expected, there was a fair amount of activity on the part of Committee No. 1. but little if any progress was made by Committee No. 2., although it did have its Rules confirmed. In 1932/33, a total of 188 'students' attended classes organised by VECs in cities and urban areas, in occupations related to the furniture trade: woodmachinists; cabinet makers; french polishers and upholsterers, 26 of the latter being females. The majority of these, 148 in all, were located in Dublin. The Dublin Committee set up sub-committees catering for cabinet makers and chair makers, woodmachinists, upholsterers and french polishers. By 1937, each of these had made recommendations for the training and education of its apprentices. The upholsterers' sub-committee proposed evening classes for its apprentices, whereas the other three recommended courses in technical schools during working hours on two days per week, to supplement training on the job. In 1947, it was reported that four meetings of the main Committee were held which were concerned mainly with classification and ratios of apprentices, and the making of 45 attendance orders. It was also reported that training courses continued to be held at Bolton Street and that attendances and general progress were good.(56) In the same year, 1947, No. 2. Committee met for the first time since 1939 and discussed the question of organising special courses of instruction for apprentices in Cork and Limerick, but it was not until 1950 that the amended Rules of this Committee were confirmed. These included a provision that, where apprentices had completed two years attendance at a wholetime Day Junior Technical Course, they would be allowed one year off the normal period of apprenticeship.(57) In 1951/52, the Dublin Committee served attendance orders on 67 apprentices, pupils attended classes regularly and the majority

of second year apprentices sat the Department's written and practical examinations in carpentry and joinery, Junior Stage, with satisfactory results. In 1952 also, both Committees established sub-committees to deal with industrial relations problems between employers and apprentices, taking a lead from the Hairdressing Committee.(58) In 1940, courses for the training of cabinet makers and french polishers had been organised for the first time in Bolton Street Technical School, and attendance orders had been served on 23 apprentices. The Report of the Department of Education for the 1940/41 session commented on these two initiatives as follows:

Satisfactory progress was made at the Cabinet Making course but it was evident from the results of the course in French Polishing that instruction in this trade is best given under factory conditions.(59)

#### **Supervision and Enforcement:**

The question of the enforcement of the 1931 Act was taken up at the 19th. meeting, in 1954, of the House Painting and Decorating Trade, and it was decided to write to the Minister for Industry and Commerce requesting that inspectors should be appointed for the specific task of enforcing apprenticeship rules. Up to 1952, enforcement had been the responsibility of Department of Industry and Commerce officials, but, as from May 1952, the task was transferred to the General Inspectorate which decided in 1953 that:

Inspection under Apprenticeship Rules throughout the country could only be done by the General Inspectorate as opportunity offers.(60)

In the period from November 1939, to September 1954, an examination of the General Inspectorate Register shows that 53 prosecutions were brought against employers for breaches under the 1931 Act. The offences consisted mainly of failures to furnish particulars in respect of apprentices, failures to produce records of wages and time worked, failures to comply with attendance orders, employment of apprentices in excess of the numbers prescribed in the Rules, recruiting an under-age apprentice and acceptance of a fee for an apprenticeship. All of these offences were dealt with by applying the Probation Act or by fines ranging from ten shillings to ten pounds. One apprentice who failed to attend class on foot of an attendance order served on him was fined ten shillings.(61)

**Some Special Initiatives:**

In the period under review, 1930 to 1960, quite a number of initiatives in the apprenticeship area, or closely related to it, were taken by the Department of Education or by the VECs. Among these were the introduction, in 1931, of a scheme for the award of medals for excellence in craftsmanship for which, in the first year, there were 156 candidates. Apprentice scholarships were awarded to provide opportunities for apprentices to attend full-time science and technology courses and to enable apprentices from the remoter districts to attend classes in city colleges. Training schemes for factory workers were arranged jointly with industry to provide workers for new boot factories in Dundalk and Clonmel and in other industries elsewhere. The practical training on the machines was organised in the factories in the evenings, using the foremen as instructors, and the theoretical work was done in the technical schools. In 1934, a special course for the printing trade was organised, in conjunction with unions and employers, whereby instruction in the technical school took place each morning and

the apprentices returned to their employment in the afternoon. Thirty six apprentices were provided for in 1934/35 and this number was expected to rise to 54 in the following year. A new system of technical school examinations was introduced in May 1936 and, in 1960, 4,616 apprentices took examinations in trade subjects. In 1941, Juvenile Training Centres were set up under the auspices of Comhairle le Leas Oige, a sub-committee of the Dublin VEC, to organise suitable courses of training for unemployed young persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years, including the training of youth leaders. National apprenticeship competitions were organised and, in September 1960, eighteen Irish apprentices competed in the International Apprenticeship Competitions in Barcelona. A Trust Fund, the Mary Hardiman Trust, was set up to foster new ideas for the training of apprentices. The special needs of particular localities were provided for as, for example, in Killybegs, where a special boatbuilding course for apprentices was organised. Ingeniousness was displayed in Mohill, in the 1956/56 session where, because of a shortage of funds to purchase exercise materials, apprentices carried out essential repairs to the school buildings and, in addition, were involved in building work for local farmers, including the erection of cow and pig sheds and plumbing and sewage work. In Bolton Street, in 1946/47, an advanced technological day course in mechanical engineering, based on a two day per week release, was organised for nine apprentices leading to the award of Associate Membership of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. Farriery courses were conducted in Ballinasloe, Kilkenny, Roscommon and Skibereen, the Department providing examinations in Junior and Senior Farriery in 1949/50.

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**New Beginnings:**

By the late 1950s, however, the activity seems to have plateaued and development began to slow down. The apprentice position in the large, well-organised firms in the cities and urban areas was probably reasonably satisfactory, but difficulties were many in small firms and in rural districts. The Apprenticeship Act of 1931 was seen to be a failure and alternative initiatives and ideas were already being promoted.

The major problems which arose in the operation of the Act and which had already been identified during the passage of the Bill through the Oireachtas, had, by 1938, if not sooner, brought the Department of Industry and Commerce to the conclusion that the future of the Act was in doubt. The onset of the Emergency seems to have provided an excuse for not actively promoting the second stage of the plan, which was to 'focus on those trades which had little or no organisation'.(62) The record of events suggests that the Department's policy was to continue to progress what had already been started, but, unless there was an agreed joint approach from employers and trade unions, to take no further initiatives in the designation of trades. A study of the Reports of the Department of Education for the period also shows that there was a recognition, in that Department too, that the Act was not effective. Perception on the political front on the lack of progress with the Apprenticeship Act was, no doubt, muted by the fact that the 'fall back' non-statutory apprenticeship system, operated by the Department of Education and the VECs, on a voluntary basis and with voluntary committees, was working quite well. In particular, the special schemes within the State and semi-State bodies were very effective, and provided the skilled manpower needed for the development and expansion of these organisations.

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**Report of the Commission on Vocational Organisation:**

However, the issue of apprenticeship came into the public domain again with the publication of the Report of the Commission on Vocational Organisation in 1943. This Commission, set up rather reluctantly by Mr. De Valera following a motion in the Senate in 1938, and chaired by Dr. Michael Browne, Bishop of Galway, was very critical of the bureaucracy of the civil service. It commented adversely on the rigidity of the Rules made by the statutory Apprenticeship Committees, and stated that evidence given to them had shown that the 1931 Apprenticeship Act was not being worked. At the same time, it referred to the progress that had been made by the voluntary committees. On apprenticeship, the Commission had this to say:

From the Report of the 1926 Commission and the evidence tendered to us by many witnesses it appears that the only satisfactory way of regulating training and entrance to the trades is by joint action by masters and workers. Here is an instance of a work of great importance to the community and to industry which can be done only by a joint vocational body. As long as workers and employers are unorganised, unregulated recruitment for the trades is likely to lead to conflict and chaos.(63)

In a reference to the costs of technical education the Commission stated, 'To spend public money on giving technical education which could be better given in the factory ... is not merely a useless but positively injurious expenditure'.(64) and, further, commented on the disproportion between the expense of vocational education and the numbers and skill of workers prepared by it for industry and commerce. The Commission was also critical of the dual control exercised by the Departments of Industry and Commerce and of Education. The former was keenly interested in the supply of skilled workers,



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especially for new industries, and was in contact with employer and labour organisations. Its Minister was responsible for the operation of the Apprenticeship Act, and decided whether or not technical education should be compulsory for apprentices. But Apprenticeship Committees could only request the Department of Education, which was not in contact with industry, to provide it. The Commission recommended that trade boards should be transformed into joint industrial councils and that Joint Industrial Boards should be set up which would regulate all apprenticeship matters and which, as representative of the trade, should co-operate with VECs to ensure that adequate standards of skill were maintained and that neither overcrowding nor undue limitation of apprentices would be tolerated. As regards Joint Industrial Councils, before the advent of An Cheard Chomhairle, trades which had not been designated under the 1931 Act often organised their apprenticeship matters under the umbrella of a Joint Industrial Council. In fact, the Hairdressing Trade, which was the first trade to be designated under the 1931 Act, but which was not designated under the 1959 Apprenticeship Act nor the Industrial Training Act of 1967, now organises its apprenticeship scheme through Joint Industrial Councils.

Pressures for change were coming from other quarters too. Mr John Ingram, who had been Chairman of the Commission on Technical Education and who, in 1944, was planning a post-war school building programme, wrote to the Department of Industry and Commerce, in June of that year, commenting that the number of craftsmen was considerably lower than in pre-war years, that the number of apprentices had been reduced and that this would affect his building programme. He wanted to know why the provisions of the Act were not being more widely used, and if, for some reason or another, the Act was defective. The reply from Industry and Commerce tended to be non-committal, but reading between the lines, it was apparent that the Department

was not happy with the position. The letter pointed out that, in its submission to the Youth Unemployment Commission, the Department had fully set out its position in relation to the Apprenticeship Act. In 1948, a resolution was passed at the Annual Congress of the Vocational Education Officers requesting that the Building and the Engineering Trades should be designated by the Minister for Industry and Commerce under the 1931 Act. The resolution was discussed at the Departmental conference held on the 6th. January, 1949, and it was decided not to declare the Building and Engineering Trades to be designated trades for the purposes of the Act, a decision which was conveyed to the Vocational Education Officers Association.

**The Commission on Youth Unemployment:**

Meanwhile, working away in the background since 1943, when it was set up by Sean Lemass, under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, was the Youths Employment Commission (also known as the Commission on Youth Unemployment). This Commission, which reported eight years later in 1951, and which had taken evidence in relation to apprenticeship and the operation of the 1931 Act, made a number of specific recommendations on apprenticeship. Prefacing their remarks with the reservation that the Apprenticeship Act had been found by experience to be difficult to operate successfully, the Commissioners made the following recommendations:

(a) that Apprenticeship Committees, as contemplated by the Apprenticeship Act, 1931, be established for those occupations to which the Act may be suitably applied;

(b) that it be mandatory on Apprenticeship Committees to make rules relating to educational qualifications and age

of entrants and the training and instruction to be given to apprentices;

(c) that there should be no bar to entrance into apprenticeship of any young person save failure in the educational test prescribed by the Apprenticeship Committee, or physical unfitness;

(d) that on completion of apprenticeship, the apprentices be required to pass a test of competency approved by the Apprenticeship Committee, as a condition for recognition as a tradesman;

(e) that a National Apprenticeship Committee be established to co-ordinate the activities of the different Trade Apprenticeship Committees, e.g. in the matter of the general level of training and the maintenance of an adequate supply of skilled workers.(67)

There was a Reservation and an Addendum by a member of the Commission, Mr. Peter McCarthy, on the matter of trade apprentices. He recommended the repeal of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act and its replacement by a small, independent, representative body, which would decide on the ratio of apprentices to skilled workers in each trade, minimum standards to which factories and workshops employing apprentices must conform and which would 'in general exercise a benevolent supervision over all matters affecting apprentices'.(68)

#### **A New Apprenticeship Bill:**

In 1952, work began in the Department of Industry and Commerce on the drafting of a new Apprenticeship Bill which would supersede the 1931 Act, and which would bring within the scope

of the new legislation the four trades which had been already been designated. A number of factors contributed to the inordinate delay in the preparation of this new Bill. On the political front, there were three changes of Government during the period, in 1951, 1954 and 1957, with three Ministers for Industry and Commerce, Sean Lemass, William Norton and Jack Lynch. De Valera was elected President in June, 1959, and was succeeded as Taoiseach by Lemass. A further complication was the split in the trade union movement, involving James Larkin and William O'Brien, which began in 1945 and was not formally healed until 1959. This inhibited discussions and agreement on the three attempts to progress the drafting of the new measure. These issues will be discussed in detail in the following chapter as will the Memorandum for the Government which was submitted in June 1958, setting out the defects in the old legislation and the reasons for the new Bill. Included in the Memorandum were the recommendations of the Youths Employment Commission.(69) The Government approved the text of the Bill in October, 1958, and the Apprenticeship Act, 1959. was passed by the Oireachtas on 15th. December 1959. The long title of the Act was:

An Act to make better provision for the regulation of apprenticeship in certain trades and for that purpose to establish a body to be known as An Cheard Chomhairle and to define its powers and duties, to replace the Apprenticeship Act 1931 and to provide for other matters connected with the matters aforesaid.(70)

In the seven years of its operation, An Cheard Chomhairle was to make a significant impact on the training and education of apprentices in Ireland.

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## Chapter Nine

### AN CHEARD CHOMHAIRLE - THE APPRENTICESHIP BOARD

1959 to 1967

#### Introduction:

By 1950 there was general acceptance that the Apprenticeship Act of 1931 had been a failure and that new legislation was needed. It would appear too, from comments made by Sean Lemass when, as Minister for Industry and Commerce, he spoke in the Dail in the debate on the second stage of the 1958 Apprenticeship Bill, that that Department had already come to this conclusion as early as 1938. It is significant that, although the Boot and Shoe Repairing trade was formally designated in 1939, a statutory committee for this trade was never established. On 11th. March 1949, in a letter to the Congress of Irish Unions, the Department summarised the meagre achievements of the Act, and requested the views of the Congress on its operation, inviting suggestions which would make it more useful and effective.(1) This began a series of four attempts to reform the apprenticeship system during the nineteen fifties, which culminated in the passing of the Apprenticeship Act, 1959, under which An Cheard Chomhairle - The Apprenticeship Board - was set up in 1960. However, by this time there were major changes taking place in the Irish economy which were eventually to lead, among other things, to the formulation of a comprehensive manpower policy, of which apprenticeship training was only a part. These changes will now be examined briefly.



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**A New Departure:**

The nineteen sixties were the years of the 'rising tide' and, for a decade, it seemed as if all boats might indeed be lifted, as economic expansion became a reality. It was a decade in which a fundamental revision of economic organisation took place, as the nationalist doctrine of self-sufficiency, 'Sinn Fein', was abandoned in favour of a more realistic conception of Ireland's economic relationship with Britain and Europe. The change was accelerated by the harsh economic and social realities of the nineteen fifties - high unemployment, massive emigration, in which 400,000 left the country between 1957 and 1961,(2) a steadily declining population and the resulting stagnation, malaise and near despair which prevailed. By the mid-fifties it was clear that the old policies were not working and that drastic remedies were needed.

There were straws in the wind as far back as 1942, when Sean Lemass, then Minister for Industry and Commerce, in a memorandum, floated the necessity for post-war planning to ensure expansion.(3) Change was also inherent in Ireland's application for Marshall Aid in the post-war years, with its requirement for the submission of a development programme - an early exercise in 'planning' - and its implied involvement in Europe, as well as an admission of inter-dependence with the British economy.(4) By the mid-fifties all political parties had accepted the idea of attracting foreign capital for investment in Irish industry.(5)

By the end of the fifties the climate was right for change. The circumstances were also propitious. The closing years of the decade had seen the rise of a new generation of young, energetic and very capable civil servants, most notably Patrick Lynch, Loudon Ryan and T. K. Whitaker, economists all. And, in June 1959, Sean Lemass succeeded Eamonn de Valera as Taoiseach.

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The succession could be said to epitomise the change of political ambience, from de Valera's rural-based and visionary style to the more pragmatic, down to earth, urban perspective of Lemass. Although his influence had been great, Lemass's authority could be questioned up to the time of his accession. He was now in a position to get things moving. He defined his aim by stating, 'The historical task of this generation is to consolidate the economic foundations of political independence'.(6) In seeking to achieve this he would have to reverse policies which he had adopted strongly in former years.

The new departure can be dated from the publication of T. K. Whitaker's document, Economic Development, completed in May 1958, and published the following December. Its objective was so to direct the public capital programme that it would help to create 'productive and self-sustaining' employment. This would involve a change of emphasis from social to productive aims. The programme would support the profitable sectors of agriculture, encourage entrepreneurship and competitiveness and attract foreign investment by grants and tax incentives. The first Programme for Economic Expansion, based on Whitaker's principles, was introduced by Lemass, with the assistance of large loans from the World Bank.(7) It marked a historic shift from protection towards free trade and to encouragement, rather than discouragement, of foreign investment in Ireland.(8) It was a five year investment programme with a specific target of a 2 per cent growth rate. It involved positive management of the economy, and a willingness to take some risks with the balance of payments in the interests of economic growth. (9) This would have been anathema to the traditional Department of Finance mind.

In the following years the Plan was seen to work. There was a new professionalism in the approach to business management and marketing. Between 1960 and 1969 three hundred and fifty new

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foreign companies were set up in Ireland, with help from the I.D.A. Manufacturing exports increased in value by £19m. between 1958 and 1960, almost half of the increase coming from the new industries.(10) The economic growth rate rose by 4 per cent, and living standards by 50 per cent. during the 1960's. Average net emigration fell dramatically, from 43,000 between 1956 and 1961 to 16,000 between 1961 and 1966, and the fall continued to the end of the decade. In the 1966 Census total population showed a modest rise for the first time since the Famine. In 1970, the marriage rate reached its highest point since 1864, when records began. On the other hand employment increased very slowly, the fall off in agricultural employment being barely compensated for by the industrial sector. Growth continued through the Second Programme (1964 - 1970) and lasted into the mid seventies. (11)

In 1961 Ireland applied for admission to the EEC but because of the opposition of General de Gaulle to the entry of Britain, Irish membership had to be deferred and was not achieved until 1972. An Anglo-Irish free trade agreement was signed in December, 1965, and provided some preparation for the market conditions of the EEC. Meanwhile Lemass continued with his policy of a gradual lowering of tariff barriers with the same objective.

#### **Other Developments:**

There were other developments which contributed to the opening up of Irish society to the influences of the wider world, and helped to change outlooks and attitudes, during the nineteen sixties. Among them were the opening of the first television station, RTE, which began broadcasting on the 31st. December, 1961, the growth of the tourist industry, and externally, Ireland's active participation in the United Nations. They were

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also the years of the Second Vatican Council which opened up some windows closed for centuries, to admit the fresh air of ecumenism. But the decade ended on a darkening horizon as the first manifestations of the Northern Ireland troubles created a new preoccupation for the people of Ireland.

During those years of growth there was a gradual realisation of the importance of education and its economic and social implications. A major analysis of the education system was carried out by the Department of Education in co-operation with the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD). The report of the survey team was published in 1966, in Investment in Education, a document which provided a blueprint for modern education in Ireland at all levels. The findings had many implications for educational planning in the areas of improvement in participation levels, rationalisation of primary school provision and co-ordination of post-primary schooling. The report called for the setting up of a special development unit within the Department of Education to initiate and develop educational policy.(12) The most dramatic development in the area of education was the announcement by the Minister, Donogh O'Malley, that free post-primary education would be provided from the year 1967/68 onwards, with free transport for pupils living more than three miles from the nearest second level school. Between the years 1966 and 1969 the number of secondary school pupils rose by 44,000 - as much as in the preceding ten years. (13)

One of the concerns of the Department was for the raising of the status of vocational schools and of technical education. An initiative taken in that respect was the introduction of a common Intermediate Certificate programme for vocational and secondary schools, in 1966. A proposal to introduce a Technical Leaving Certificate was not proceeded with. The Minister, George Colley, appealed for co-operation and co-ordination

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between small secondary and vocational schools in order to provide a comprehensive curriculum, but this was not achieved to any significant degree. The status of technical education got a major boost with the establishment of eight regional technical colleges, of which the first five were opened in September, 1969. They were intended to provide a very wide range of courses, from Leaving Certificate to technician level, including apprenticeship courses. A new type of college of higher education with a strong technological emphasis, the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) was founded in Limerick, in 1970, and enrolled its first students in 1972. This was followed by a similar Institute in Dublin, established in 1975, with first enrolments in 1980. In 1972, the Government set up the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) as a validating and awarding body for the new colleges. (14)

Because of a falling out between labour leaders James Larkin and William O'Brien a split had occurred in the trade union movement in 1945, when the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and some smaller Irish unions, seceded from the Trade Union Congress to establish their own Congress of Irish Unions. This split was formally healed in 1959, and so the decade opened on a forward-looking note in the trade union milieu. (15) As a result, consultation between the Government and the unions was facilitated, with important consequences for later apprenticeship legislation.

The publication of a white paper on manpower policy in 1965 was a first exercise in planning for the labour requirements of industry. The main elements of the policy were to be: the forecasting of changes in the supply of, and the demand for, labour; the provision of suitable redundancy schemes and financial assistance for those who lost their jobs; the development of the Employment Service to inform of vacancies and of the availability of suitable persons to fill them and

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the appointment of an agency for the overall control and co-ordination of the service. In this paper, also, the Government announced its proposal to establish an Industrial Training Authority.(16)

### **A New Apprenticeship Bill:**

The process which culminated in this development began when a new Apprenticeship Bill was prepared and submitted to the Government for approval in June, 1958. In the Memorandum for the Government, prepared by the Department of Industry and Commerce, the recommendations of the 1951 Commission on Youth Unemployment on apprenticeship were set out in full (see previous chapter), and the views of the Minister were outlined as follows:

The Minister for Industry and Commerce agrees with the Youth Unemployment Commission that the present hapazard methods of recruiting and training apprentices gives no guarantee that industry will be supplied with workers of the requisite knowledge and skill. He believes that faulty apprenticeship can have a profound effect on the national economy; can result in poor and inefficient workmanship; can be reflected in higher costs meaning higher prices at times and can adversely affect our ability to compete in export markets.(17)

The Memorandum went on to state that there had been so much adverse comment that the Minister was convinced that the first step towards a better system was the outright repeal of the 1931 Act, and its replacement by fresh legislation. The views of the Minister for Finance were also set out. He was generally not in favour of the Bill as drafted and doubted if it represented an effective approach to the problems of

apprenticeship, particularly as regards restrictive practices and the provision of grants to employers. If the Bill was to go ahead then the Minister for Finance considered:

that it should be financed from moneys provided by the main beneficiary - industry itself - possibly in the form of a levy on the number of craftsmen employed. .... In particular, such firms as do not undertake the training of apprentices should contribute significantly to a grant fund.(18)

The Government approved the Bill and it was introduced in the Dail on 17 July, 1958.

**First Attempt at Reform:**

It was when Sean Lemass was dealing with the second stage of the Bill, in November 1958, that it transpired, following questioning by Deputy Norton of the Labour Party, that three previous attempts to revise the apprenticeship system had taken place in the nineteen fifties. The first of these was in May 1952, when the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Sean Lemass, wrote to the Congress of Irish Unions, the rival Trade Union Congress and the Federated Union of Employers, seeking their views on the problems with the apprenticeship system, and stating that he would much prefer to see a solution to the existing defects worked out jointly by organisations representing employers and workers through voluntary co-operation, rather than by way of mandatory legislation and Government intervention. In a further letter to the organisations concerned, in November 1952, the Minister summarised the position as follows:

The Minister has reason to feel gratified that all parties appear to be agreed on two fundamental points viz (i) that the existing systems of apprenticeship stand in need of re-organisation and overhaul and are capable of improvement in many directions. (ii) that it is better, if at all possible, that the remedies for the existing defects should be found through voluntary co-operation than by way of mandatory legislation and Government intervention. (19)

In his second letter the Minister stated that he was prepared to assist the organisations concerned in every way to arrive at a satisfactory solution. In order to 'bring to fruition the promises of co-operation which he had received' he proposed to arrange the holding of joint discussions between the representatives of the two Congresses and the FUE and to provide, if necessary, a chairman and a secretariat with the objective of securing agreement on the steps necessary to achieve a solution. However, when the Minister wrote to the three organisations on 21st. January 1953, inviting their representatives to a meeting in the Department of Industry and Commerce on 10th. February, the following reply was received from the Secretary, Congress of Irish Unions:

I am to say that it has been previously indicated in connection with other matters, that this Congress is not prepared to send representatives to any conference at which the T.U.C. is also represented. (20)

Thus ended the attempt by Sean Lemass to get his own preferred option, a voluntary system of apprenticeship, based on agreement between the representatives of workers and employers, without the need for mandatory legislation.



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**Second Attempt at Reform:**

In May 1953, Lemass had made another attempt, this time on the basis of mandatory legislation. He decided that the draft headings of a Bill should be prepared 'on the general lines of the Bill now before the Dail' i.e. the 1958 Bill, to give the three parties concerned the opportunity of commenting on the draft heads, before the question of proposing legislation was brought before the Government.(21) The problem this time appears to have been that the parties consulted were opposed to the mandatory approach.

**Third Attempt at Reform:**

The third attempt was made by Deputy Norton, when he became Minister for Industry and Commerce in succession to Sean Lemass, following the defeat of Fianna Fail in the 1954 general election. He had prepared a document, Proposals for a Bill to amend the Law Relating to Apprenticeship, which was forwarded to the two Congresses in March 1956, for their consideration, and on which he invited their views. Because of the sensitivity of the situation at the time, Mr. Norton was careful to point out that the proposals in the Bill did not necessarily represent the views of the Minister. At this stage efforts were being made to heal the split in the trade union movement and a body called the Provisional United Organisation of the Irish Trade Union Movement (PUOITUM) had been set up for this purpose. Both Congresses set up sub-committees to consider the Minister's request, and both made separate submissions to their parent bodies. In the Congress of Irish Unions' file on Apprenticeship (Committees etc.) 1949/59, a letter dated 27th. November 1956, from the Secretary of the CIU to James Larkin T.D. suggests that the PUO should now request a conference with the Department of Industry and Commerce for a preliminary

discussion on the Minister's letter. The matter seems to have ended at that stage, probably because the Coalition lost the general election and Fianna Fail returned to power in March 1957. The fact that the two Congresses had succeeded in producing an agreed approach to apprenticeship was an important factor in the passage of the 1959 Apprenticeship Bill.

**Trade Union Attitudes to the Proposed Legislation:**

During the discussions generated by the efforts of Lemass and Norton to reorganise apprenticeship in the fifties, a number of trade unions made submissions to their parent Congresses. Extracts from two of these have been included as an indication of the attitude to the perceived problems of apprenticeship at the time. In a letter dated 4th. July 1952, to Mr. Leo Crawford, Secretary, Congress of Irish Unions, Mr. G. Doyle, General Secretary, Operative Plasterers' Trade Society stated:

For the past 30 years the trend of Architecture in Ireland has moved in such a manner as to cut out of Building, to the lowest minimum, any semblance of Ornamental Work from their plans under the plea of Hygiene and that cornice work or ornamentation of ceilings and walls were only a receptable for dust thereby losing such craftsmanship as produced the work as seen in the old houses of Gardiner Street, Henrietta Street and Merrion Square. (22)

It will be recalled that one of the first trades to be designated under the 1931 Act was that of House Painter and Decorator, in spite of the opposition of the unions representing the building trades to the Act. However, in an undated submission again to Mr. Crawford, Mr John Mulhall, Secretary. Irish National Painters and Decorators Trade Union commented as follows:

We agree with the Minister that the Apprenticeship Act 1931 has failed to achieve its purpose, but the responsibility for failure must rest with the Minister's Department; due to the inactivity of that Department in operating the Act, the Committee appointed for the Painting and Decorating Trade has not met for close on two years. ....In our experience of the Apprenticeship Act 1931, and the results shown ... we are at a loss to know what good could come of any further State intervention, as we are satisfied that we could operate a successful scheme of Apprenticeship for the Painting and Decorating Trade through a joint Committee of Painting Employers and the Painters Trade Unions.(23)

During the second stage debate on the 1958 Bill in the Dail, in November, the Minister, Mr. Lemass, was under strong pressure particularly from Labour deputies, to abandon the

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mandatory legislative approach and to revert to his original, and his own preferred, option of an apprenticeship system based on voluntary co-operation between employers and workers. He expressed his views on this as follows:

... if both sides were to come together and undertake the overhaul of the existing apprenticeship arrangements in a serious and liberal way, there would be no need for this Bill. Voluntary co-operation would be the better way, if it could be worked. The experience of the 1931 Act, however, has shaken confidence that it will work. .... It is clear that we can no longer adopt a policy of laissez faire on this subject. (24)

Referring to the scope of the Bill, he explained that it would apply mainly to the craft trades, as it would not be practical to apply the type of apprenticeship schemes envisaged to a loosely knit occupation like agriculture, and it would not be appropriate for professional and clerical occupations. One of the major defects of the 1931 Act would be removed as the initiative in the matter of setting up apprenticeship schemes would be vested in a central authority to be known as An Cheard Chomhairle.

He referred to communications he had received the previous day from the two Trade Union Congresses, (the split had not yet been healed although negotiations were at an advanced stage). The Congress of Irish Unions described the Bill as 'an unwarranted interference with the rights of trade unions to negotiate with the employers concerning apprenticeship arrangements', a statement which Lemass considered tantamount to a challenge to the authority of the Oireachtas. The Irish Trade Union Congress, while conceding that improvements in apprenticeship were necessary, urged that he should revert to his 1952 approach and seek a solution to the problem through

voluntary co-operation, rather than by legislation. His response to this was that:

    this important and urgent problem cannot be left to the unions alone, if that means, as it had meant up to this, doing nothing about it if they do not wish to tackle it.  
(25)

He explained that voluntary co-operation would still be the motive force towards progress, and that it was not intended that the provisions of the Bill would apply automatically to all trades which had apprenticeship schemes. Trades which operated satisfactory schemes would not be interfered with, while other trades would have the opportunity, following consultation with An Chomhairle, 'of putting their houses in order as far as their apprenticeship arrangements are concerned. Any trade which does so will be left outside the scope of the Bill'. (26)

On the issue of the mandatory versus the voluntary approach, there were interesting contributions from a number of deputies. Stating that the Bill could become an 'Apprenticeship Folly', Deputy Norton maintained that it was not possible to operate apprentice legislation without the goodwill of the employers and the trade unions, and both had stated that they preferred the voluntary approach. In reference to the Bill he had this to say:

    It is fatuous to think that we can get a Bill from officials in a Department, drafted by a parliamentary draftsman, when none of those participating in the conception of the Bill ever served one day's apprenticeship to any trade. (27)

Referring back to Lenass's attempt at a voluntary scheme in 1952, which failed when the Congress of Irish Unions refused to attend a meeting to which the Trade Union Congress had also been invited, Deputy Norton felt that the time was now ripe for another such approach because of the unity discussions between the TUC and the CIU and the existence of a joint committee, the Provisional United Trade Union Organisation (PUTUO), representing both Congresses. He suggested that the Bill be withdrawn to give the opportunity to develop an agreed scheme.

Deputy Denis Larkin, who was later to become a member of An Cheard Chomhairle, also considered that the problem could be solved without legislation, through the PUTUO and the FUE. With reference to mandatory legislation he said:

There is no means known to man that can compel a skilled craftsman to train, guide and advise the lad he is supposed to train in the skills of his trade, if he does not feel like doing it, and no Order of a Minister or of any committee will have any effect.(28)

He also objected to the chairman being described as a director, 'a mistaken approach if one hopes to get co-operation from a representative group of trade unions and employers'. On the question of compulsory certification at the end of apprenticeship he said 'what the trade unions are concerned with is whether the apprentices will get employment, not certificates'.

Deputy James Dillon advised the Minister to have discussions with the trade unions and employers before the next stage and, in typical fashion, observed, in reference to the Minister using his majority to force the matter through the Dail:

He has a majority and he can use it, but there never was a time when a person should be more scrupulous in using a majority than the time when he has the majority (29).

There was also a suggestion from Deputy Dillon that the Minister might consider allowing the employers and the trade unions a period of six months during which they might propose another agreed Bill. If this was satisfactory as far as the Minister was concerned, would he be prepared to introduce it and discharge his own? Lemass was not prepared to discuss this but stated that as far as he was concerned the Bill was there and could be amended in detail 'this Bill cannot be avoided and ... one way or another we are going to get some progress' (30).

Deputy Rooney complained that the Bill was a shock with no consultation with, or consideration for, the interests involved. He suggested that:

The Minister should take the Bill to the employer organisation and the trade union organisations and thresh it out with them in order that he could bring in a Bill that would be acceptable to the House and to the interests concerned.(31)

The position of the Minister is probably best summarised by his comment:

You will make no progress whatever in this matter unless it is made quite clear that the Bill is coming on the Statute Book and that, while it can be amended, it will get through in some form or other. We have spent six years sitting on our hunkers doing nothing about this matter. As far as we are concerned we are not prepared to sit any longer (32).

The Second Stage was passed on a division by 56 votes to 11. After a further discussion, the Committee Stage was fixed for 3rd. December, in spite of protests that this allowed only a month for consultations to take place, and for amendments to be tabled and discussed. The Minister said that he was quite prepared to give the Congresses and the FUE all the time in the world to agree on the terms of a Bill, but he did not think that this was being realistic; there would be no agreement and it would again mean no progress. Deputies Norton and Mulcahy strongly objected to the fixing of the Committee Stage for December, maintaining that there would not be sufficient time to finalise the stage before the Christmas recess but Lemass was adamant. The last word was had by Norton when he remarked in reference to the Minister, 'Pharaoh may relent in the meantime'. In fact it was almost a year later, in October 1959, before the the Committee Stage was to come before the Dail. In the meantime, in June 1959, De Valera was elected President, Sean Lemass became Taoiseach and the new Minister for Industry and Commerce, Jack Lynch, became responsible for the remaining stages of the Bill.

**Involvement of the Social Partners:**

What happened in the interval is interesting, and gives an indication of the style of Lemass, his professionalism as a politician, his pragmatism, his ability to listen and his determination to get things done. He took the unusual step of referring the Bill, as had been suggested by Deputy Rooney, to the employer and trade union organisations. A joint committee representing the FUE and the now united Trade Union Congress, presumably with a chairman and secretariat supplied by the Department of Industry and Commerce, as Lemass had suggested in 1952, was set up to consider the Bill and to come up with agreed recommendations. This approach proved to be effective,

for when Jack Lynch introduced the Committee Stage on 21st. October 1959, he informed the House that there were 63 sections in the Bill, and he was putting forward 53 amendments, 40 of which represented agreement between the employers and trade unions in the joint committee. In relation to the others, Mr. Lynch had this to say:

There were certain conflicts between the two sides and, naturally, I had to take one side or the other, or to take something of a middle course, if that were possible (33).

The fact that there had been such a measure of agreement meant that all the amendments to the Bill had an easy passage through the Dail. Deputy Norton, now in opposition, remarked that in the end 'sweet reasonableness had prevailed' over the 'bull in the china shop' approach.

Some of the amendments proposed by the joint committee and passed by the Dail were unusual. For example, in relation to representation on An Chomhairle, both the employers and the trade unions were to have five members each, and not four as was originally proposed, whereas the educational representatives remained at three. Furthermore, it was provided that the educational members should not have a vote as this would upset 'the traditional balance of power between workers and employers'. In the report of the joint committee on this issue it was maintained that 'the real training of apprentices is carried out by employers and craftsmen on the job and not in technical schools'. While the Minister was surprised at this he felt that he had no option in the matter if he was to get agreement.(34) The Bill was also amended to the effect that, while the Minister had to appoint the five members nominated by the trade union side he could select five members from a panel nominated by the employers. In addition, a 'pairing' arrangement was built into the Bill whereby, if the number of



employer members at a meeting exceeded the number of union members, or vice versa, the excess members on either side would abstain from voting. In the event of the 'pairing' arrangement not being agreed to at a meeting, the Chairman had the power, on a voting issue, to postpone the vote to the next meeting. Somewhat similar arrangements were provided for in relation to any apprenticeship committees that might be established. It appears obvious that neither side was prepared to allow legislation to interfere with tradition.

In a discussion in relation to the existing Army Apprentice School and the Air Corps Apprentice School, raised by Deputies Cosgrave and Norton, the Minister stated that it was fundamental in the Bill that An Chomhairle, having looked at any apprenticeship scheme and found that it was operating well, would not interfere with it. Rather than have good schemes put 'offside', it was important that, not only were they not interfered with, but they should be adopted and provided with the requisite certification.

Other amendments proposed by the joint committee required that it should be mandatory, rather than permissive, on An Chomhairle to make rules in relation to the dismissal of apprentices, educational entry requirements and the age of entry. In view of the lack of action associated with discretionary powers in the 1931 Act, the joint committee probably considered that, if An Chomhairle had only discretionary powers in respect of these important and sensitive areas as far as recruitment of apprentices was concerned, it might be difficult to get agreement between employers and unions, with the possibility that these rules might not be made at all. In the case of the educational rules, the joint committee recommended that An Chomhairle should consult with the appropriate apprenticeship committee before making these rules. It was also provided that An Chomhairle

could make rules making it an offence to take a premium for an apprenticeship, a provision that was welcomed by Deputy Norton who maintained that in recent years the taking of fees, in many instances, had gone hand in hand with very shady practices. A small registration fee was recommended as was the establishment of a register of apprentices, which would be available for inspection by members of the public, and a register of persons qualified for apprenticeship by age and educational qualification. This latter register was to be used by employers who were recruiting apprentices. In an effort to ensure that employers would not be in a position to use apprentices as cheap labour, and that they had the facilities to train them, the consent of the apprenticeship committee was required before an employer could take on an apprentice. It was apparent, too, that the joint committee were not prepared to give the educational sector a free hand in deciding the content of courses for apprentices, and it recommended that An Chomhairle and the apprenticeship committees should have 'a greater say in determining the curriculum of courses of technical instruction to be provided'. Instead of imposing a fine on an apprentice who failed to attend a course for which he had been released by his employer, a deduction from pay was substituted.

There were other issues which concerned the deputies who took part in the debate. Deputy Haughey suggested that An Chomhairle might consider making available careers information for the guidance of parents, and publish text books and manuals for the trades, which would be of use to apprentices and tradesmen. Deputy Norton referred to the matter of strikes and apprentices, and the section in the Bill making it an offence for anyone to interfere with an employer who had been granted permission to take on an apprentice, and the relationship of this provision to the question of strikes. He made the following points:

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The opinion of the Trade Union Congress is that this is an extremely important principle from their point of view and they consider that the right to protect the apprentice is a right which resides in them. The right to decide when and in what circumstances the apprentice member of the union should withdraw his labour is, they contend again, a matter on which they have sole jurisdiction. Their attitude in relation to this Bill and in relation to similiar matters has always been that they cannot hand over to a second party or a third party a function that has always been exercisable by the trade union which is looking after the economic interests of the apprentice.

(35)

The Minister assured Mr. Norton that a trade dispute was not contemplated as constituting the interference with an employer referred to in the section in question.

The fact that there had been substantial agreement in the joint committee greatly facilitated the passage of the Bill through the Dail. There were two minor amendments arising from the debate in the Senate, one of which had the effect that a person who had apprentices on his premises would not be required to answer questions that might incriminate himself. The Bill was passed by the Dail on 28th. October, 1959 and the Apprenticeship Act 1959, became law on 15th. December, 1959. It was stated by the Minister that the annual grant would initially be of the order of £5,000 and this was expected to rise to £50,000 in ten years.

#### **The Apprenticeship Act, 1959:**

The new Act did not presage a radical or indeed a new approach to apprenticeship. Rather it was an attempt to correct the

difficulties that had arisen in the efforts to apply the 1931 Act. Most of these had been identified in the Dail debate on that Act, many of them by Sean Lemass himself. In fact, had the same process of consultation taken place then, as in 1959, there probably would have been no need for new legislation, and apprenticeship would have been much more developed as the economic progress of the nineteen sixties took place. The 1959 Act set out to do what the 1931 Act attempted and had failed to do. It was based on 1931 thinking which sought to structure, rationalise and improve traditional apprenticeship. Both Acts tended to look backwards rather than to the future. Within a few years of the passing of the 1959 Act, it was recognised, that while apprenticeship fulfilled a need, it would have problems in reacting to a rapidly changing labour market situation. This market had other needs, in the wider manpower area, with which an apprenticeship system based on tradition, could not cope, no matter how good it was. Quite early in its operations the newly established Cheard Chomhairle was advising that a broader approach to training was necessary. But apprenticeship was a political issue, not only in the general sense, but particularly as between employers and trade unions, and, in later years, in the area of education. It was not always possible to make the changes that were necessary.

**An Cheard Chomhairle:**

The main purpose of the 1959 Act (36) was to make better provision for the recruitment and training of apprentices and for that purpose to establish a body, An Cheard Chomhairle, the duty of which was to promote and regulate satisfactory schemes of apprenticeship in various trades and industries throughout the country. An Chomhairle would have a Chairman, appointed by

the Government, and twelve members,- five representing trade unions, five representing employers' organisations and three educational members. These latter would not have voting rights. The Chairman would be a full time executive, to be known as the Director of Apprenticeship. In contrast with the voluntary nature of the 1931 Act, An Chomhairle would be empowered to carry out an examination of the methods used in any trade for the recruitment and training of apprentices. If these were found to be entirely satisfactory it would take no further action, but could keep the position under review. If they were found to be defective in certain respects only, An Chomhairle could decide not to bring the trade within the scope of the Act, provided the defects identified were remedied to its satisfaction. However, if An Chomhairle considered it necessary that the apprenticeship arrangements in any trade should be brought under statutory control, it had the power to designate the trade, either throughout the State or in a part of it. When a trade was designated, either for the whole of the State or for part of it, apprenticeship committees could be appointed by An Chomhairle, structured on the same lines as itself, and with an independent chairman. In certain cases, An Chomhairle itself could act as an apprenticeship committee. It was in this power to take the initiative to designate a trade, to set up apprenticeship committees and to appoint staff to supervise its operations, that the strength of the 1959 Act lay. It also accounted for its success when compared with the earlier Act.

Once a trade had been designated and a committee appointed, An Chomhairle was required to make rules defining what constituted employment by way of apprenticeship in the trade, minimum educational qualifications and age of entry rules, and rules covering the dismissal of apprentices. The apprenticeship committees, on the other hand, were required to make rules relating to the period of apprenticeship, to training, and to progress reports on apprentices to be submitted by employers,

and could, at their own discretion, make rules prohibiting the taking of premiums. In respect of rules made by committees, a certain amount of rationalisation and co-ordination was achieved by requiring that these had to be confirmed by An Chomhairle, which could also modify them. All rules carried the force of law and breaches of them could entail prosecution. However, the powers to make rules fixing minimum wages and hours of work, which were vested in apprenticeship committees in the 1931 Act, and which appeared to take up an inordinate amount of their time, were not repeated in this Act. These matters, it was felt, were more appropriately settled by negotiation between employer and worker organisations.

As already indicated, provision was made for two registers, one of candidates seeking apprenticeships, who were qualified by age and educational standards and from which employers were required to select apprentices, and the second of persons who were apprentices, and who had to pay a fee for registration. Both of these registers had to be maintained by apprenticeship committees. In order to maintain some control over the numbers of apprentices being employed, the consent of the committee was needed before an employer could take on an apprentice, while a committee could also require an employer to take on additional apprentices, if it felt that sufficient numbers were not being trained. It was an offence for a person to 'interfere' with an employer who was required to take on apprentices in such cases. Committees had the power to conduct investigations into disputes between apprentices and employers and, where apprentices were affected by a trade dispute, An Chomhairle could take action to safeguard their continued training and instruction.

With regard to the education of apprentices, An Chomhairle could make arrangements with vocational education committees for courses suitable for apprentices. Where these were

provided, employers could be required to release their apprentices, who, in turn, were required to attend. Provision was made for the prosecution of employers who failed to comply, and apprentices who did not attend could have deductions made from their pay. An Chomhairle could also arrange with the Department of Education for the holding of examinations, including practical tests, for apprentices. One of these, a junior examination, was to be held about half way through the apprenticeship and the other, the senior examination, towards its end. An Chomhairle was required to issue a certificate on satisfactory completion of apprenticeship (which was to include success in the senior examination). A certificate was also to be issued, in similiar circumstances, to an apprentice in a trade which had not been designated, following an examination by An Chomhairle which had decided that designation was not required. This was to provide for the situation highlighted by Deputies Norton and Cosgrave during the Dail debate, in relation to good apprenticeship schemes which might be 'put offside' by not being designated. Grants could be paid to employers, other than State bodies, who 'zealously and successfully' trained apprentices in the designated trades. Scholarships and prizes could be awarded and international competitions and exhibitions could be financially supported.

As has been seen, there was power in the Act to exclude certain apprenticeship schemes from specified provisions of the Act, and, in such cases, An Chomhairle would issue a certificate to that effect. In certain circumstances employers could be exempted from the requirements of certain rules made under the Act, for example, the rule requiring that an apprentice should be recruited from the register of candidates for apprenticeship, the age of entry rule and the minimum educational entry qualification rule. Supervisors, with fairly wide powers of inspection, could be appointed. Failure to comply with the rules constituted an offence under the Act, for

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which maximum fines of £10 and £20 could be imposed. Finally, the 1931 Act was repealed and any agreements on apprenticeship matters in force under the Industrial Relations Act, 1946, would cease to have effect in any apprenticeship district for which apprenticeship rules had come into force under the new Act.

**Preliminary Discussion Programme by Chairman:**

An Cheard Chomhairle was established on 11th April, 1960, and held its inaugural meeting, which was addressed by the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Jack Lynch, on the 25th of the month. The Chairman, and chief executive, appointed by the Government, was a civil servant, also from the Department of Industry and Commerce, J. A. Agnew. His official title was Director of Apprenticeship, but it was rarely used, possibly because of the comments of Denis Larkin, during the Dail debate on the Bill. Armed with the Act and with his Board in place the new chief executive began his task. The first requirement, as he saw it, was to gather as much information as possible on existing apprenticeship arrangements, both at home and abroad. In the period from 2nd. May 1960, to 4th March 1961, he had no less than fifty meetings with individuals and groups involved with apprenticeship. He kept records of all those meetings and they are an excellent source of information, not only of the situation in relation to apprenticeship in Ireland at the time, but also of how his strategy developed. His first meeting was with a Mr. Christie, 'chairman of the Apprenticeship Committee set up under the 1931 Apprenticeship Act'. They agreed that the two Department of Industry and Commerce civil servants who were dealing with the 1931 Act Committees at the time should become the first staff of An Cheard Chomhairle.(37) Among the persons with whom discussions were held were individual members of An Chomhairle, officials from trade unions, semi-



state bodies, the Department of Education, educational institutions and representatives of the National Joint Industrial Council for the Electrical Industry, which was operating its own scheme for apprentice electricians. Visits were also made to the City and Guilds of London Institute, the Ministry of Labour and a Government Training Centre in England.

In a discussion with Mr. Martin Gleeson, a member of An Chomhairle and chief executive officer of the Dublin City VEC, it was recorded that neither the employers nor the unions were anxious for statutory control of apprenticeship, and that the craft unions were unhappy with the nominations made by ICTU to An Chomhairle, on the grounds that the general unions were over-represented. It was suggested that this might have been deliberate policy on the part of ICTU, in an effort to eliminate some of the restrictive practices of the craft unions. At this meeting, also, both Agnew and Gleeson agreed that the best approach would be to talk to as many people dealing with apprenticeship as possible, get as much information as could be got on existing arrangements, both good and bad, all leading up to:

the preparation of a set of general guiding principles against which individual schemes could be measured. .... It would probably be a mistake to examine an individual trade under the Act before some guiding lines had been agreed on. It would be a very useful thing to have the trade unions and the employers committed to broad general principles.(38)

A somewhat similar approach was recorded, following a meeting with an employer representative on An Chomhairle, Mr. Tonge. In a discussion with Mr. Leo Crawford, of ICTU, some light was shed on the issue of ICTU's nominations to An Chomhairle. Apparently, the craft union representatives were regarded as

being 'rather lightweight' with the general union members, including Mr. Crawford himself, presumably being the heavyweights. In regard to the situation, generally, in apprenticeship, Mr. Crawford is recorded as saying:

..... the difficulty was to know where to start on the job of examining apprenticeship. He expressed the view that the making of satisfactory arrangements in the building trade would be practically impossible.(39)

He also referred to the necessity to have joint control of apprenticeship schemes, and mentioned, in particular, the scheme operated by the Society of the Irish Motor Traders which was controlled by the employers. He said that the same was true of some of the trade unions which controlled apprenticeship and did not give employers a voice. The advice given by Mr. Fintan Kennedy, ITGWU, and a member of An Chomhairle was recorded as follows:

..... our approach to the job should not be rushed.  
..... He said progress might be slow at first but he thought that if we proceed carefully and bring people along with us by persuasion the results would likely be better.(40)

He said that the general unions had not the same approach as the craft unions, and would assess the whole problem with an open mind. It was vital to spread the activities of An Chomhairle throughout the country, particularly in the building trades.

In his memorandum on his meeting with Mr. Burgess of the Builders' Federation, Mr. Agnew records that he got the impression that apprenticeship in the building trade was, in general, not organised at all. Mr. Burgess referred to the non-

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static nature of the industry, and its effect on apprenticeship. He suggested that what was needed was a committee representing Government, employers and trade unions, which would space out building developments in the new centres, resulting in a fairly static workforce in which apprentices could have constant employment. The question of trade union involvement in the Motor Traders' apprenticeship scheme was discussed at a meeting with Mr. Charles Warren, a member of An Chomhairle, representing the employers in that industry. The problem appeared to be the large number of unions representing workers in the trade, but it was felt that the matter could be resolved.

The issue of restrictive practices in the craft unions was highlighted at the meeting with Mr. Denis Larkin, T.D., an ICTU representative on An Chomhairle. The problem was caused by a lack of security on the part of craft workers, who felt that if too many apprentices were allowed into the trades, there would, in time, be a glut of skilled men, and some would have to emigrate. When it was suggested that it was preferable that people emigrating should do so with some degree of skill, Mr. Larkin replied:

that while this was a sensible approach in theory, in practice the existing tradesmen were afraid that younger tradesmen would get the available jobs here and the older craftsmen would be the ones who would be forced to emigrate.(41)

He accepted, however, that it could be the case that, by creating a shortage of skilled workers, craft unions could put themselves in a better bargaining position.

The Dental Board, which had plans for the establishment of an apprenticeship scheme for dental mechanics, requested at a

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meeting, that the trade should be designated under the new Act. While advising the Board to go ahead with their plans, Mr. Agnew outlined the position of An Chomhairle as follows:

..... it is proposed to concentrate on industrial craft trades in accordance with the Government's policy of industrial development.(42)

On the other hand, representatives of Messrs Guinness requested that their apprenticeship scheme should be exempt from statutory control, as was provided for in the Act. The company would, however, be prepared to consider taking on additional apprentices, if requested to do so in the national interest. Bord na Mona and the Irish Sugar Company had somewhat similiar problems in securing suitable courses at local level for their apprentices, and had to make special arrangements at their own expense. The Sugar Company was investigating the provision of correspondence courses for their apprentices, on the same lines as the ESB.

The National Joint Industrial Council for the Electrical Industry, when it met Mr. Agnew, requested that its apprenticeship scheme should be exempt from statutory control, but suggested that a separate committee be set up to cover electrical apprentices not included under their NJIC. This Council was representative of the two electrical contractors' associations, the ESB and the Electrical Trade Union, and operated a good apprenticeship scheme, which included the provision of an information brochure for parents and apprentices. The position on exemption was outlined by Mr. Agnew as follows:

If therefore, after an examination, An Chomhairle felt that the NJIC scheme with improvements was a satisfactory

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one, arrangements could probably be made to exempt that scheme under Section 56.(43)

Records of meetings with officials of some of the craft unions provided interesting information. In the case of the Bricklayers' Union, the apprenticeship was to the tradesman and not to the employer, and an indenture was still used. Sons, grandsons and nephews of tradesmen paid a fee of £7 which went to the union, while outsiders paid £30, - £7 of which went to the union and £23 to the tradesman who trained the apprentice. There was a ceremony involving a lighted candle, and certain undertakings had to be given when the apprentice was entering the trade. According to the report of the meeting, the trade union official 'seemed disposed to the view that many of the customs and practices in the bricklaying trade were completely out of date'.(44) The secretary of the Plasterers' Union wanted apprenticeship in his trade left as it was. The three Painters Unions considered that a six year apprenticeship was necessary for their trade. They suggested that there should be a register of employers who were regarded as suitable to train apprentices, as a means of weeding out 'black sheep'. They were informed that An Chomhairle intended carrying out a nationwide survey of employers of apprentices, to ensure proper supervision of, and adequate practical experience for apprentices.

One of the educational establishments visited was the College at Kevin Street where a discussion took place with the Principal, Mr. Martin Cranley, and some of his staff. Among the points made at this meeting were that the administrative side in the Department of Education were not wholeheartedly behind the idea of training for skill, and that the trade examinations and the syllabus prepared by the Department, were out of date. Mr. Cranley recommended an advisory committee to advise on the subjects to be included in technical school

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courses, and on the standards to be achieved. The report of this meeting recorded:

Another point made by Mr. Cranley was that the Technical School people noticed a deterioration in the outlook of apprentices once they got on practical work with tradesmen. He felt that many tradesmen disagreed with the new system of training and vocational instruction and were inclined to run it down. This would be a great obstacle in the way of on-the-job training.(45)

A meeting also took place with Mr. Yates-Hale, Registrar of the Dublin Printing Apprenticeship Authority. This was a voluntary body comprising representatives of employers, trade unions and the educational authorities in Bolton Street College, which had developed a good apprenticeship scheme for printing apprentices in the Dublin area. It had its own rules and regulations, with which there was general agreement, and the whole scheme was tightly controlled and monitored. The Registrar stated that the printing employers and the trade unions 'would want to avoid being brought under statutory control'. In relation to this point, Mr. Agnew's memorandum of the meeting records:

..... from what he told me and from what he said in the Questionnaire, it seems clear that quite a number of changes would have to be made in the Printing Authority's scheme before it could be approved by An Chomhairle.(46)

On 25th. August 1960, at a meeting with the Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce, Mr. J. B. McCarthy, the Chairman gave an up-dated account of the position. He said that An Chomhairle now had sufficient information to start work on preparing the basic principles which should govern apprenticeship in all trades, and proposed to form a sub-

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committee of An Chomhairle to do this. His idea was that the principles laid down would be used as a yardstick, against which the existing arrangements in the various trades could be measured. The intention was to get improvements effected either on a voluntary or compulsory basis. In the report of this meeting it is recorded, 'I also mentioned that we would pick out the trades which were fairly progressive and examine them first under the Act'. (47) Mr McCarthy was advised that additional staff would be required over the next few months, and he gave an assurance of his full co-operation in this regard.

#### **A Four Stage Strategy:**

In a paper, The Problems of Apprenticeship, (48) prepared, in 1961, by the Chairman, the strategy of An Chomhairle's approach to its task was outlined in four stages:

Surveying the existing apprenticeship arrangements here and abroad.

Determining basic principles for a sound, progressive apprenticeship system.

Publishing and explaining these principles to all concerned.

Arranging for the implementation of these principles in the various trades and industries.

The first task was completed in 1960, mainly by the analysis of a detailed questionnaire which had been issued to employer organisations, trade unions, individual employers and vocational education authorities. The meetings, discussions and

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visits of the Chairman, already mentioned, provided first hand feed-back on the situation on the ground in Ireland. The European Productivity Agency promoted a number of visits by members of An Chomhairle, to study apprenticeship systems abroad. Observations resulting from these initiatives are summed up in the following extracts from the First Annual Report of An Chomhairle for the period ended 31st. March 1961:

In general little attempt has been made, on a national basis, to ensure that boys entering apprenticeships have a proper educational background, or to provide for the systematic training of apprentices in practical skills or for their release from work to attend appropriate technical school courses.

Precise statistics of the number of apprentices in training were difficult to obtain, but it is evident that little thought has been given to the question whether enough apprentices are being trained to meet the future needs of the various trades and industries.

The general approach in other countries seems to be 'when you plan to expand industrially you must, at the same time, plan to produce an adequate and well trained force of skilled men to support the expansion'.(49)

After considering the information which it had secured, An Chomhairle tackled its second task, that of determining the basic principles for a sound apprenticeship system. A sub-committee was set up for this purpose and it produced a policy document, entitled 'Statement of Basic Conditions for a Sound Apprenticeship'. These were summarised as follows:

to foster a spirit of co-operation between workers, employers and educationalists on the subject;



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to stimulate the formation of representative National Apprenticeship Committees and Local Advisory Committees to help in regulating and controlling apprenticeship;

to ensure, by promoting reasonable arrangements for the intake of apprentices and by requiring an educational standard for entry, that sufficient numbers of suitably qualified young persons enter on apprenticeship in the craft trades;

to ensure that apprentices are given, not only an adequate opportunity to acquire the necessary practical skills and technical knowledge, but also an opportunity for moral and cultural development;

to supervise the progress of apprentices by, inter alia, a system of examinations in trade practice and theory during and at the end of apprenticeship;

to ensure that there is adequate enforcement of rules laid down by An Cheard Chomhairle concerning apprenticeship.(50)

From this policy statement derived an 'operational' document entitled 'Basic Conditions for a Sound Apprenticeship' which contained seventeen requirements under the followings headings:

Conditions;            General Aim;            Control;            Minimum Age;

Educational Qualifications;            Registration and Selection;

Practical and Theoretical Training;

Technical School Instruction;

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Progress Reports; Examinations; Incentives; Certificates;

Period of Apprenticeship; Apprenticeship Agreements;

Dismissals and Transfers; Intake; Enforcement;

Under each heading was set out a statement of what, in An Chomhairle's view, should prevail in any effective apprenticeship scheme. This document was published in December 1960 and became the blueprint for apprenticeship under An Chomhairle. The full text was reproduced in Appendix 3 of the First Annual Report.(51)

The third task followed from the second. The first Annual Report referred to 'a general lack of awareness among both employers and workers of the urgent need for a more systematic approach to apprenticeship in Ireland'. The task was tackled, in the first instance, by the Chairman, who read papers to various groups throughout the country, including Trades Councils, Vocational Educational Congresses, the Cork Scientific Council and many others. All the papers presented had basically the same theme and were variously titled: A New Deal for Apprenticeship; The Problems of Apprenticeship; Apprenticeship in Ireland - The Way Ahead; Apprenticeship - A Modern Approach and others. Articles were also provided for newspapers, magazines and periodicals, including the journal of the British Association for Commercial and Industrial Education (BACIE). A series of brochures on apprenticeships in other countries was prepared and widely circulated. These were printed and published after visits to Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway to study apprenticeships there. A brochure on Apprenticeship in the United States was reprinted from an issue of the "BACIE" Journal. With the co-operation of the OECD, which provided the speakers, and the Irish National

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Productivity Committee, seminars on apprenticeship were held in Dublin, in October 1961, and in Cork, in March 1962. These seminars were addressed by experts on apprenticeship from Germany, Sweden and The Netherlands. Finally, the document, Basic Conditions for a Sound Apprenticeship was widely promoted and circulated as was a brochure, 'Apprenticeship - Your Questions Answered', which followed the seminars in Dublin and Cork.

The fourth and final stage in the strategy of An Chomhairle was arranging for the implementation of its principles for a sound apprenticeship system within the various trades and industries. The Act itself was specific on how this was to be done: an examination of apprenticeship arrangements in a trade or group of trades, to be followed by a decision on whether designation under the Act should follow, whether exemption should be granted and a certificate to that effect issued, or whether improvements in a scheme could be made to the satisfaction of An Chomhairle. Where the decision taken was to designate, the process of making designation orders followed, leading to the establishment of statutory apprenticeship committees, the making by An Chomhairle of classification rules, and rules relating to educational entry requirements, minimum age and the dismissal of apprentices. The apprenticeship committees, once set up, would then make further rules in relation to the period of apprenticeship, to the training to be provided, to progress reports, and where necessary, to the taking of apprenticeship premiums. Once this framework was in place it would be monitored, in the first instance, by the relevant apprenticeship committee and also by An Chomhairle, as the national body, both assisted by an inspectorate.

#### **Planning Implementation:**

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The difficulty, as had been pointed out by Leo Crawford of ICTU, was to know where to start. In his address to the Congress of the IVEA in Kilkee in June 1961, Mr. Agnew said:

As a matter of policy we have decided to concentrate first on the craft trades - those trades which are concerned with manufacturing, construction and maintenance and have, therefore, a direct bearing on national productivity. ... There are 40 to 50 craft trades and we cannot deal with them all simultaneously on a statutory basis.(52)

In his discussions with the Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce, already referred to, he was more specific and said, 'we would pick out the trades which were fairly progressive and examine them first under the Act'. In spite of the fact that the initial survey had shown that apprenticeship arrangements in Ireland, with few exceptions, were hapazard, there were a number of good starting points. The Society of Irish Motor Traders had a reasonably good apprenticeship scheme in place on a national basis, as had the National Joint Industrial Council for the Electrical Industry. A number of the state and semi-state bodies had good schemes, mainly in engineering and electrical trades, as had Messrs Guinness. The Dublin Printing Apprenticeship Authority operated a successful scheme, as did the Post Office, although this latter scheme was more in the technician rather than the craft area.

Of the trades designated under the 1931 Act, only that of furniture in Dublin and in Navan could be regarded as being concerned with manufacturing, and consequently, with national productivity. In spite of the provisions made in their regard, in paragraph 21 [2] of the 1959 Act, no special arrangements were made for the trades designated under the 1931 Act. Neither the hairdressing, the brush and broom nor the boot and shoe repairing trades were ever designated under the new Act,

whereas furniture and painting and decorating were, the latter as part of the construction trades group. The provisions of the 1931 Act in respect of the furniture trade, however, remained in force until 31st August 1963.(53)

In fact, An Chomhairle decided on a two-pronged approach. In the first instance, it selected three trades - motor, electrical and furniture - for statutory examination under the Act, and a number of others for which it would endeavour to establish voluntary apprenticeship committees. The rationale behind this was explained by Mr. Agnew at the IVEA Congress in Kilkee, where he stated:

In the case of trades which we are not examining immediately we are trying to get them to set up voluntary committees in advance of examination under the Act. It is our belief that such Committees could go a long way towards implementing the Board's policy, on a voluntary basis, in advance of designation under the Act. (54)

Statutory examinations of apprenticeship arrangements in the trades of electrician, motor mechanic and of five trades in the furniture trade group were completed in the year ended 31st March, 1962. These examinations took the form of detailed questionnaires which were sent out to all employers. In the trade of electrician, the number of apprentices was recorded as 1,000 with an annual intake of 200/250 and a 5 year apprenticeship period, while the figures for motor mechanic were 2,279, 400/500 and 5 years, and those for the furniture trades were 508, 90 and 6 years (4 years in the case of females) respectively. Following this examination these trades were designated under the 1959 Act and National Apprenticeship Committees were established in 1963.(55)

In the period 1961/62, voluntary apprenticeship committees were

established, for the engineering and metal trades for the State as a whole, for the building trades on a local basis, in the Dublin area, in Cork, Limerick, Dundalk and Waterford, and for the trade of dental mechanic and the printing trades in Dublin and Cork. Preliminary discussions had begun with a view to setting up voluntary committees for certain trades in the textiles industry, and for the printing trades outside the Dublin and Cork areas. In some cases, for example in the printing trade in Dublin, and in the building trades in Limerick, existing local apprenticeship committees were availed of.(56) In the initial stages much of the work of An Chomhairle was of an administrative and legal nature, the preparation of statutory rules and regulations for the designated trades, the piloting of these through the National Committees and through the Board of An Chomhairle, and their subsequent publication and dissemination. In general, statutory rules tended to adhere closely to the guidelines in the Basic Conditions for a Sound Apprenticeship, which had been prepared and published by An Chomhairle in 1960. For example, the minimum age was set at fifteen years, educational entry qualifications were based on the Group or Intermediate Examinations results, with variations in specific subject requirements for particular trades. (Minimum educational standards were laid down but employers could, if they wished, set higher standards.) The period of apprenticeship was five years, with provision for a reduction in certain circumstances, and with a probationary period of not more than three months, although there were some variations on this. Voluntary committees, when they made rules (which were non-statutory) also tended to follow the pattern set by the statutory committees. The net result was that throughout the country, either on a statutory or a voluntary basis, the general format of apprenticeship tended to become standardised. There were, of course, exceptions, notably the Dublin Printing

Apprenticeship Authority, which retained a seven year apprenticeship for some of its trades and six years for others.

A joint consultative committee, involving the Department of Education and An Chomhairle, had been established at an early stage to consider the effects of apprenticeship policy decisions on the educational sector. These included matters such as the increased demand for appropriate educational courses for those seeking apprenticeships, provision of facilities for educational release courses, and for night classes, and the early publication of group certificate results, to facilitate the recruitment of apprentices by employers. Liaison with the OECD continued and that organisation sponsored team visits, which included members from voluntary as well as statutory committees, to study apprenticeship arrangements overseas.

By March 1962, An Chomhairle had eleven administrative staff, an increase of five on the previous year, but as the need to draw up statutory training rules and to supervise their implementation developed, there was a requirement for technical staff, and steps were taken to recruit supervisors for the motor, electrical and furniture trades. During 1963, considerable progress was made with statutory rules in the three designated trades. The first to be put in place, on the 9th. April 1963, were the classification rules (specifying what constituted employment by way of apprenticeship in a particular trade), minimum age and educational entry rules for the motor trade. The other two trades had similar rules in operation by the end of the year. An Chomhairle also took over the apprenticeship scheme which had been operated by the Society of Irish Motor Traders since 1945. A Register of Apprentices in the motor trade was also opened during the year, and a registration fee of ten shillings per apprentice was introduced. Registers of Candidates for Apprenticeships were

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also instituted. A number of experimental schemes for motor apprentices were organised in the Dublin area, in September 1963, in association with the Dublin Corporation, Guinness and Roadstone. These involved an initial four week full-time course in Bolton Street College. In the three designated trades, particularly outside the urban areas, problems arose with the provision of release classes for apprentices, mainly because of the lack of facilities, and the difficulty of getting enough apprentices to form viable classes. The organisation of block release classes instead of day-release was seen as a solution to this. In the case of the electrical trade, An Chomhairle was not satisfied that the intake of apprentices was sufficient to meet future needs, and requested the Committee to examine the position with a view to increasing intake the following year. This resulted in an additional 150 electrical apprentices being recruited in the 1964/65 period.

A survey of the engineering and metal trades was carried out, during 1963, by the voluntary committee. There were thirteen trades in this group and the number of apprentices was returned as 2,167, of whom 1,152 were fitter apprentices, with an annual intake of 300/400. The survey also showed that a substantial number of firms experienced difficulty in filling their requirements for skilled men, and they attributed this to a general shortage, emigration, trade union restrictions on entry, and the lack of housing facilities.(57) A survey was also carried out in the trade of dental mechanic, and showed a figure of 45 apprentices. An Chomhairle was concerned about the Dublin Printing Apprenticeship Authority, which had been in existence since 1955, and reported:

... this voluntary scheme is not in accord with An Chomhairle's policy for sound apprenticeship. In particular, An Chomhairle considers that the arrangements for the intake of apprentices, both as regards the field



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from which apprentices are drawn and the number of apprentices in each year, need to be reviewed.(58)

A survey of the printing trades, in areas other than Dublin, was also carried out and showed that there were 299 apprentices, of whom 168 were compositors. Of the firms surveyed, twenty-two indicated that they had difficulty in recruiting apprentices, mainly due to trade union restrictions, coupled with a shortage of boys with suitable standards of education. Forty-three firms had difficulty in recruiting skilled workers, because of a general shortage. The annual intake of apprentices to the trade in the provinces was between fifty and sixty. It was planned to provide block release courses for country printing apprentices in the School of Printing, Bolton Street, Dublin, with the possibility of similiar courses in Cork.

#### **International Apprenticeship Competitions in Dublin:**

A major event took place in July 1963 when the International Apprenticeship Competitions, initiated in 1954, were held in Ireland for the first time. The venue was Bolton Street College, which had been specially equipped for the occasion. Thirteen countries were represented and two hundred and twenty-two apprentices competed, of whom thirty-two were from Ireland. The results were outstanding, as far as Ireland was concerned, the Irish team winning seven gold, seven silver and four bronze medals, the highest number of awards won by any team in the Competitions, and the highest number achieved by an Irish team since their first particattion in 1957.(59) The staging of the event in Ireland was seen as a valuable means of stimulating national awareness of the importance of apprenticeship training, and of enabling this country to

assess its methods of training in relation to those of other countries.

**Progress Report:**

In its Fourth Annual Report, for the period ending 31st. March 1964, An Chomhairle summarised the progress to date. Statutory apprenticeship schemes had been brought into operation for the motor trade in April 1963, and for the electrical and furniture trades in September, 1963. It conceded, however, that 'much work will be necessary before they are completed and operating properly throughout the country'. Supervisors had been appointed in each of the three trades to oversee this. Statutory examinations of the engineering and metal trades and of the building trades had been carried out, and it was expected that both of those trade groups would be designated before the end of 1964. In relation to the building trade the Report stated that it :

..... presents considerable difficulties. Progress is likely to be slow unless more stable conditions in the flow of building work, and consequently in the pattern of employment, are achieved and unless working conditions on many building sites are improved.(60)

A statutory examination of the printing industry had been decided on, but progress depended on how soon the other two trade groups would be designated. A survey had also been carried out of existing facilities for educational release classes in technical schools and An Chomhairle was 'satisfied that a large expansion will be required and has made proposals for these to the educational authorities'.

The Report also stated :

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During the year An Chomhairle had carried out a detailed review of the provisions of the Apprenticeship Act 1959, in the light of its experience over the past four years and the problems which it anticipated will arise in the future. This review brought into focus the question of the adequacy of the existing legislation to meet the needs of training for industry and An Chomhairle had decided to submit its views on the matter to the Minister for Industry and Commerce.(61)

Within four years of its establishment in 1960, therefore, and with its planned programme less than half completed, An Chomhairle had concluded that an apprenticeship system could not provide fully for the manpower needs of the developing Irish economy. It recommended to the Minister for Industry and Commerce:

..... that consideration should be given to the introduction of legislation for the establishment of an authority for providing for industrial training needs in general, including training by way of apprenticeship. An Chomhairle has come to the conclusion that, having regard to the employment targets in the Second Programme for Economic Expansion, the needs of industry for skilled workers could not be met by means of apprenticeship training alone.(62)

Having thus put a limit to the scope of its activities and, as it turned out, to its tenure of office, the work of An Chomhairle, over the remaining two years of its operations, concentrated on firming up what had already been put in place, and in bringing under statutory control the engineering and metal trades group, the trade of dental craftsman, the construction trades group and the printing trades group. In the case of the three trades that had already been designated, the

firming up process consisted of the making, by the National Apprenticeship Committees, of Period of Apprenticeship Rules and Training Rules, the preparation of apprentice log books, the organisation of release classes, including the development, in association with the Department of Education, of junior and senior apprentice release centres, the registration of apprentices and the general supervision and monitoring of apprenticeship arrangements within firms. In the Training Rules for the trade of motor mechanic, which came into operation on 1st. September 1964, a schedule of operations to be covered by the apprentice in each of the five years of apprenticeship was laid down, the junior stage covering the first two years and the senior stage the last three. Rule 4. specified that:

An employer shall in the employment of apprentices ensure the training and instruction of such apprentices in the manner specified in these Rules and in accordance with the scheduled programme.(63)

The employer himself was required to oversee the training or to appoint a responsible person from his workshop staff to do so.

In bringing the other four trades/trade groups under statutory control the usual procedure applied, an examination of the trade or trade group, followed by designation, the establishment of National Apprenticeship Committees and the making of the various rules, followed by the implementation of these rules and the other provisions of the Act. In the case of the trade of dental craftsman, for example. a voluntary national committee for the trade had been established in 1961, with representatives from the Dental Board, the Irish Dental Association, the Dental Laboratories, Trinity College, the College of Technology at Kevin Street and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. An Chomhairle provided a secretary and the committee was funded jointly by contributions from that

body and the other bodies which were represented. This committee continued to operate until November 1965, when it held its final meeting, the trade having been designated in September of that year. A statutory committee for the trade was set up in March 1966. During its term of office this voluntary committee made recommendations in relation to minimum educational standards, minimum age of entry, technical school courses, registration of apprentices and indentures. Before the trade was formally designated, there was considerable discussion as to whether the trade should be called that of 'dental technician', 'dental mechanic', or 'dental craftsman'. In the end, the term 'dental craftsman' was rather reluctantly accepted.(64) The Engineering and Metal Trade group, which comprised thirteen trades, was designated in August 1964, the Building and Construction Trade group, with twelve trades in 1965, and finally, in August 1966, the Printing Trade group with ten trades.(65)

#### **Other Issues of Concern to An Chomhairle:**

In the examination of the building and construction industry, which was carried out with the assistance of the Central Statistics Office, and which involved the sending of questionnaires to 3,375 firms, it was estimated that there were 4,220 apprentices in employment. Again, many employers reported having difficulties in recruiting employees and, according to An Chomhairle 'other measures are needed to overcome existing shortages on a short-term basis'.(66)

Other issues of concern to An Chomhairle as its term of office drew to a close were, the shortage of places for apprentices on educational release courses, and the growing need to grant exemptions from the minimum educational qualifications. In the case of release courses, only 900 places were available for

day-release for the building trades and, as it was anticipated that the number of apprentices would rise to between 4,500 and 5,000, a major expansion was needed in technical school places. This was a matter that was also considered by the Investment in Education Report team, which projected that an additional 500 places would be required by 1971.(67) The problem with educational qualifications was the failure rate in the Day Group Certificate, the position in 1964 being that 42% of those taking the examination failed to qualify for any trade. An Chomhairle felt that it might have to review the existing Rules to ensure that the educational requirements related 'realistically to the skills required by apprentices in the various trades'.(68) The general approach of An Chomhairle to the application of the many rules and regulations it had promulgated was one of persuasion and, although the threat of penal sanctions was used on occasions, only in one case was an employer brought to court. A factory owner in Navan refused to allow three of his apprentices to attend release classes, for which Attendance Orders had been served both on him and on the apprentices. Legal proceedings were taken against the employer, but these failed for lack of proof that the employer had refused the apprentices the time and liberty to attend the classes.(69)

By 1966 limited national statistics of apprentices in the designated trades were becoming available. The Investment in Education Report quoted the 1961 Census of Population as giving the number of 'apprentices and learners' in the State as 15,232, and estimated that there was a total of 10,490 apprentices in the 'traditional skilled and craft trades' in 1962/63, of whom 5,774 [55%] were attending day and/or evening classes in vocational schools.(70) In relation to the trades designated under the 1959 Act, figures taken from the AnCO booklet, Apprenticeship Statistics 1966 - 1981 (71) give the

following information on registered apprentices at the 31st. March 1966:

Trade group	First years	Total-all years	Ed. Rel.
Furniture	N.A.	518	318
Printing	N.A.	N.A.	227
Electrical	N.A.	1686	1419
Motor	N.A.	2506	1800
Engineering	N.A.	1759	1029
Construction	N.A.	3723	1150
Dental	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Total	1610 (est)	10,192	5943

Of the total number attending release classes, 4,754 were day release and 1189 were block release. (Figures abstracted from Table 20 and Table 3 Apprenticeship Statistics 1966 - 1981).

(N.A. - Not Available).

#### **An Cheard Chomhairle - An Assessment:**

In 1966, responsibility for An Cheard Chomhairle was transferred from the Department of Industry and Commerce to the newly created Department of Labour, with Dr. Patrick Hillery as Minister. In 1965, Mr. Nial MacLiam succeeded Mr Jack Agnew as Chairman, the latter taking up a position in the Department of Industry and Commerce, working on the wider aspects of manpower policy. By 1967, when the Industrial Training Authority - AnCO- was established and the 1959 Apprenticeship Act repealed, An Cheard Chomhairle had put in place a reasonably effective, nationally structured apprenticeship system, which had general support and which covered seven trade groups and over forty trades. This system was backed by legislation and

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statutory rules, with penal provisions, which, it was hoped, would never have to be used. In fact some of them, notably the Dismissal Rules, would be particularly difficult to enforce in an employment situation which was no longer a static one. The system was being expanded and developed within the limited area of the designated trades with training on-the-job, and the employer's attitude to this, being the particularly weak link. It was supervised and monitored by a competent and committed staff. But the system was a hostage to tradition, it had made no radical changes, it had not ventured outside the traditional craft trades. In fact, it only attempted to optimise the positive elements of the traditional apprenticeship system. In relation to its own programme, it had failed to tackle one vital area, that of testing and certification. Although provision had been made for this in the Act, and although both junior and senior trade examinations were provided by the Department of Education, Certificates of Completion of Apprenticeship were issued to apprentices without the requirement that they should have passed the senior examination, as was provided for in Section 42 [1]. Perhaps this deficiency would have been rectified had An Cheard Chomhairle remained in existence for some time longer. The influence of tradition must in part, at least, have resulted from the manner in which the original Bill was amended by the joint committee of employers and trade union representatives, and from the structure of An Chomhairle itself and that of the National Apprenticeship Committees.

Shortly before it went out of existence, a deputation from the Board of An Chomhairle saw the Minister for Labour with a request that it should continue in existence, as an advisory committee on apprenticeship matters to the Council of AnCO. The Minister would not agree to this but pointed out that AnCO could, under its own Act, appoint whatever committees it wished to advise it.(72) The sixty-sixth and final meeting of An



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Chomhairle was addressed by the Secretary, Department of Labour, Mr. T. O'Cearbhaill, who paid tribute to An Chomhairle:

for the significant contribution it had made in stimulating interest in the whole field of training and manpower ... this interest had led to the new industrial training legislation, to the evolution of a manpower policy and to the setting up of a Department of State to deal with labour and manpower problems. ...for having laid the groundwork so well for the new training authority ... and for handing over apprenticeship training in such good order...(73)

It would have been fair comment, also, that An Chomhairle had provided a good example of the successful involvement of the 'social partners' in a semi-State body.

**Manpower Policy: Second Programme for Economic Expansion:**

Meanwhile, in the wider area of manpower policy, developments were taking place, contemporaneous with the activities of An Cheard Chomhairle, which had scant regard for tradition, and which were all about economic progress, forward planning and forecasting. The First Programme for Economic Expansion had, in 1958, heralded the introduction of the legislation which resulted in the establishment of An Cheard Chomhairle, and it was the publication of the Second Programme, in 1964, which convinced that body that a wider brief for training than that provided for by the 1959 Apprenticeship Act was needed, if the targets of the Programme were to be achieved. In bringing its views on this to the attention of the Minister for Industry and Commerce, An Chomhairle was, in effect, acknowledging that a break with tradition was necessary. In relation to the measures to be taken in regard to technical education and training, the Programme summarised the aims as follows:

The objects of these measures are to ensure that a lack of skilled manpower will not limit the modernisation of industry and its adaptation to the competitive conditions in the years ahead. The facilities proposed will be expanded to keep in step with the demands of industry for technical skills of all kinds.(74)

The Programme forecast an increase in employment of 78,000 in the decade to 1970, - 86,000 in industry, 58,000 in services - which would be offset by a decline of 66,000 in agriculture. If these targets were to be met, radical changes in training and technical education would be required. The Programme referred to 'human investment', and the 'statistically unidentified' or residual factor in economic progress, 'which may be education, training, good health, organisation or other human qualities or skills' and to the fact 'that our wealth lies ultimately in our people'. It stated:

Better education and training will support and stimulate economic expansion. Even the economic returns from investment in education and training are likely to be as high in the long run as that from investment in physical capital.(75)

The Programme set the climate for the decade but it was just a programme and things had to happen, or be made to happen, if its targets were to be achieved. In the area of manpower policy things did happen. Following a seminar on manpower policy, the Irish National Productivity Committee (INPC), in April 1964, submitted a document setting out its views to the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass. There was a further report on the subject from the National Industrial and Economic Council (NIEC) in July 1964. In September, the Taoiseach set up an Inter-Departmental Committee representative of the Departments of Finance, Industry and Commerce, Education and Social Welfare, to report

on the administrative arrangements for implementing a manpower policy. This Committee took into account the views of the Irish National Productivity Committee and those of the NIEC on manpower issues, as well as the 1963 Report of a previous Inter-Departmental Committee on Retraining and Resettlement in relation to the European Social Fund. It submitted its Report(76), in March 1965. The Committee made a number of major recommendations, including the establishment of a new State Board for industrial training, a revamping and development of the existing Employment Services operated by the Department of Social Welfare, and the setting up of a Manpower Forecasting Unit. It recommended against the establishment of an autonomous manpower authority and a separate Department of Labour (as had been suggested by the INPC), and stated that responsibility for the organisation and development of manpower services should be assigned to the Minister for Industry and Commerce, and that 'consideration should be given to changing the name of that Department to reflect its manpower responsibilities'.(77)

In relation to industrial training the Committee recommended:

A State Board, the functions and responsibilities of which should be laid down by statute, should be set up to undertake duties in respect of apprenticeship training, adult retraining by A.V.T. and 'on-the-job' methods, operative training, advance training for new industrial projects and other functions which may arise for an official body in relation to training of supervisors, 'refresher' training, training of technicians and special pre-employment training for particular industries. The Board's functions should embrace the existing functions of An Cheard Chomhairle.(78)

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**Training and the White Paper on Manpower Policy:**

Following this Report, the Government published, in 1965, its White Paper on Manpower Policy. This set out the decision it had taken to develop what was a very comprehensive policy. It included manpower forecasting, training and retraining, redundancy payments, resettlement allowances, an employment, placement and guidance service for workers (to be operated by the Department of Social Welfare), and the development, by the educational authorities, of a vocational guidance service for school children and school leavers. The Department of Industry and Commerce, where a National Manpower Agency had been established, would have overall responsibility for manpower policy. A Manpower Advisory Committee, representative of the FUE and ICTU, and chaired by an official from the Department, would be formed.(79) What is surprising about this White Paper is that it contains no reference at all to the new Department of Labour which was created the following year, and which took over responsibility for all the activities listed above with the exception of the school guidance service.

The decision in the White Paper in relation to training was as follows:

The Government propose to establish a new Industrial Training Authority with wide powers to deal with all aspects of industrial training, including apprenticeship training at present administered by An Cheard Chomhairle, and adult retraining by accelerated vocational training and 'on-the-job' methods. This Authority, in the light of the objectives determined by the Manpower Agency, will be expected to play a prominent part in ensuring that the needs of the economy for skilled workers are met and that redundant workers are, where necessary, retrained in new skills which will help them find employment.(80)

This decision limited, to some extent, the recommendation of the Inter-Departmental Committee, in that technician training and the training of supervisors were excluded. It did, however, open the way for the drafting of the Industrial Training Bill, the repeal of the 1959 Apprenticeship Act and the establishment, in 1967, of An Chomhairle Oiliuna (AnCO), The Industrial Training Authority, under which another major review of apprenticeship would take place.

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- (56) Ibid., pp.11,12,13.
- (57) An Cheard Chomhairle, Third Annual Report. p/e 31/3/63. p.12.
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- (63) An Cheard Chomhairle, Apprenticeship Act (Trade of Motor Mechanic) Training Rules, (Dublin: An Cheard Chomhairle, 1963).
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- (72) An Cheard Chomhairle, Minutes, 62nd. Meeting, 19/12/66.
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(Dublin: Stationery Office, March, 1965).

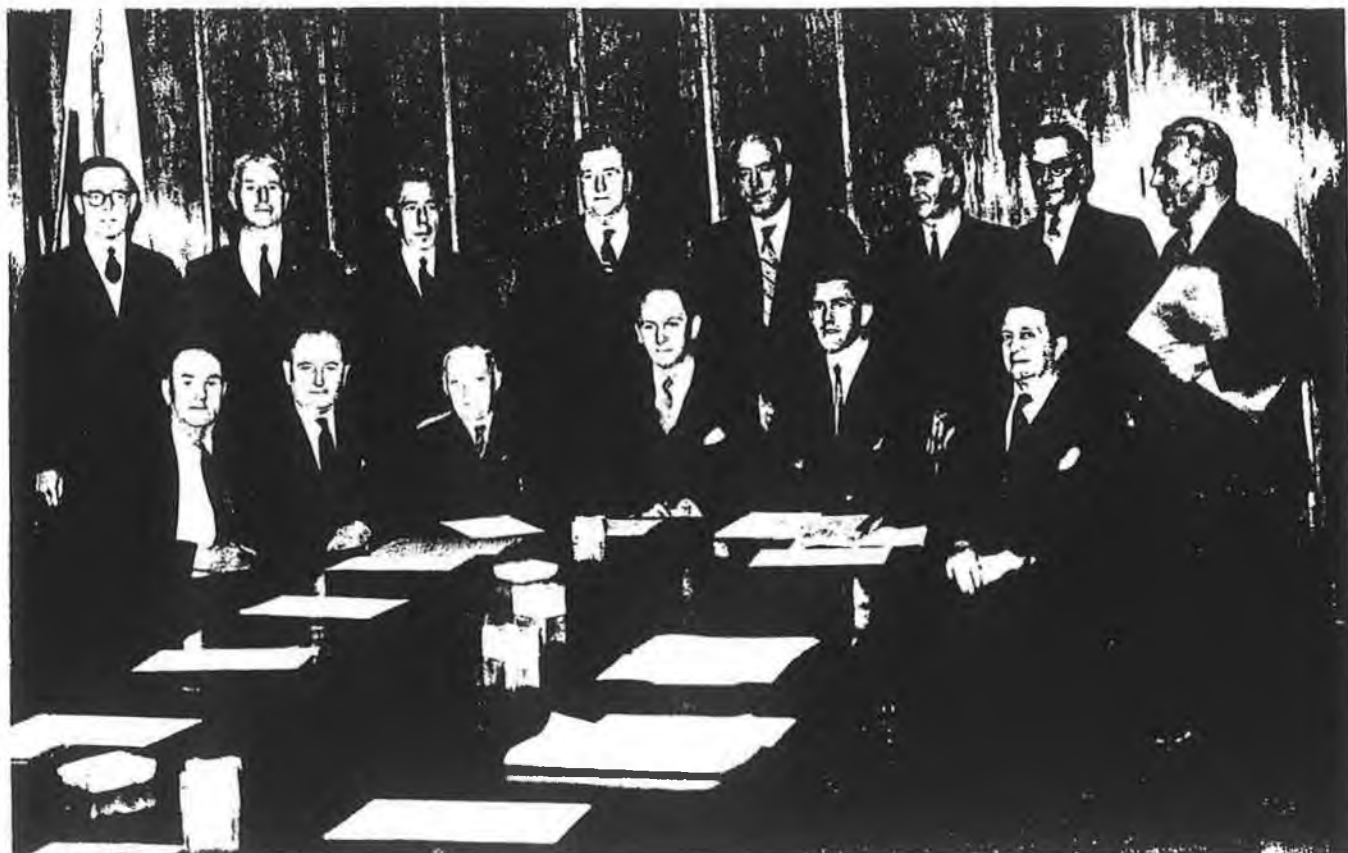
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PLATE 1



INAUGURAL MEETING OF AN CHEARD CHOMHAIRLE

**Date: 25th. April, 1960**

**Seated L. to R:** J. Cassidy, L.Crawford, W. Carpenter, Jack Lynch, Minister for Industry and Commerce, J. A. Agnew, Chairman, C. Warren.

**Standing L. to R:** N. McMahon, J.C.Tonge, T. O Grianain, D. Larkin, T.D., M. Gleeson, J. A. McConnell, C.J. Burgess, J.S. Quigley.

Source: First Annual Report, An Cheard Chomhairle.

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## Chapter Ten

### AnCO - THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING AUTHORITY - AND APPRENTICESHIP

1967 - 1972

#### **Political, Economic and Social Background:**

While the nineteen sixties could be regarded as mould-breaking, few periods of Irish history can have been more eventful than the nineteen seventies. In the course of the decade major changes occurred in many areas of public life, so that in political, economic, social and demographic terms, the period could be deemed a watershed. The shock of the violence in Northern Ireland, with which the decade opened, the impact of entry to the EEC, the change over from a mainly rural to a mainly urban society, and from an ageing to a preponderantly young population, all presented challenges to traditional attitudes and perceptions.

The Northern situation overshadowed the whole period. Though the strong emotions and fears which it evoked in the early years died down as the decade advanced, the continuing cycle of violence in the North remained an oppressive background to everyday life throughout the country. Events such as the kidnapping of the Dutch industrialist, Dr. Tiede Herrema, in October 1975, and the assassination of the British Ambassador, Sir Christopher Ewart-Biggs, the following year, brought the stark reality of the situation close to home. The persistence and intensity of the problem led gradually to a better public appreciation of its deep-rooted and complex nature, and to a questioning of some of the assumptions underlying the national

aspiration to unity - 'the biggest single change in the nationalist response to the Ulster question in the 1970's'.(1)

A main preoccupation of Government in the early seventies was Ireland's entry to the EEC. When, in 1969, the French President Pompidou withdrew France's objections to Britain's entry, the Irish government reactivated Ireland's application for membership. The Treaty of Accession was signed on the 22 January, 1972, and the terms were endorsed by an 83% majority in a referendum held in May of that year.(2) Membership greatly increased prosperity in the agricultural sector, where real incomes doubled between 1970 and 1978.(3) But the boom did not last. In 1979, the EEC, alarmed by the extent of over-production, reduced the rate of price increase under the Common Agricultural Policy. A slump in agriculture followed. Land prices, which had risen steeply, began to fall, and farmers who had borrowed heavily on the security of their land, now found themselves in serious difficulties. The industrial sector suffered through the decline of native industry under the impact of increased competition, and job creation became a major problem. The main thrust of the IDA policy in this area was to use Ireland's membership of the EEC to attract multinational companies to set up branches on industrial estates, which had been built in various parts of the country. The main concentration was on electronics and chemical industries, which were perceived to have a high growth potential, and to be relatively immune from Third World competition.(4) The new industries required a high level of technical education and training, and this was reflected in the development of third level technical colleges and industrial training centres during the seventies. However, the new industries were not labour intensive, and rising unemployment became a feature of the period, compounded by the decline in agricultural employment, rising population, and 'the large scale immigration to Ireland in the 1970's'.(5)

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During the seventies the country was living well beyond its means, as rising living standards were sustained by large-scale foreign borrowing. The aim of fiscal policy was to stimulate growth in private sector employment by creating a consumer boom. The aim was not achieved, and mounting foreign debt, rising inflation and growing unemployment underlay the impressive economic growth rates of those years. The economy was further damaged by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979. In the 1980's the emphasis of the government's manpower policy changed from providing a trained workforce for new industry to 'halting and reversing the upward trend in unemployment'. The White Paper on Manpower Policy, published in September, 1986, records 'the rapid increase' in the number of unemployed school-leavers and in 'long term unemployment among older workers'. It also refers to 'significant emigration', between 1981 and 1985.(6)

The 1970's were marked by significant demographic change. In 1966, statistics showed the first population increase since the Famine.(7) In 1972, the population figures 'touched 3 million' for the first time in almost fifty years.(8) The age of marriage dropped, while average family size dropped also. The census of 1971 showed that the proportion of the population dwelling in urban areas had just become a majority (52 per cent compared to 46 per cent in 1961).(9) The seventies also brought improvements in the area of employment equality, with the abolition of the marriage bar in public service employment, and the introduction of anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation. All in all, it seemed 'traditional' Ireland was in decline.

#### **Origins of the Industrial Training Act:**

The decision taken by the Irish people, in the referendum held in May 1972, to enter the European Economic Community (EEC)

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with effect from the 1st. January 1973, was a memorable event in Irish economic history. It followed the publication, in the previous year, of a White Paper, The Accession of Ireland to the European Communities.(10) After its initial application, in 1961, the Government had put in hand a number of investigations in connection with anticipated membership. One result was the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Retraining and Resettlement in Relation to the European Social Fund (11), which was to have a significant impact on the future of industrial training. This Committee, established in April 1962, was representative of the Departments of Agriculture, Education, External Affairs, Finance, Industry and Commerce and Social Welfare. Its brief was to draw up a scheme for retraining and resettling redundant workers, which would qualify for assistance from the European Social Fund (ESF). This Fund had been set up as part of the Social Policy of the Treaty of Rome, Article 123 of which stated:

In order to improve opportunities of employment of workers in the Common Market and thus contribute to raising the standard of living, a European Social Fund shall hereby be established in accordance with the provisions set out below; it shall have the task of promoting within the Community employment facilities and the geographical and occupational mobility of workers. (12)

In all, there were six Articles, 123 to 128, dealing with the ESF, the last of which envisaged the formulation of a Common Vocational Training Policy, 'capable of contributing to the harmonious development both of national economies and of the Common Market'. The field of application of the ESF was focused on three areas:

the occupational retraining of unemployed workers

the resettlement of unemployed workers

the maintenance of the wages of workers affected by the conversion of an industry,

In such cases the Fund would, subject to certain conditions, reimburse 50% of the amounts expended on retraining, resettlement or the conversion of workers, by Member States or by 'bodies under public law', except in the case of public employees. It should be noted that apprenticeship training was excluded as apprentices were not considered to be unemployed and for the same reason, continuation study, even of a technical nature, by young people did not qualify for assistance from the Fund. (Some modifications of these exclusions were negotiated at a later stage.)

Although the brief of the Committee was specifically directed at the opportunities offered by the provisions of the ESF, it was considered desirable, also, apart altogether from the question of EEC membership:

to consider whether the present system of dealing with unemployment could be improved by placing greater emphasis on schemes for improving mobility of labour, provision of training facilities, etc.(13)

In the event, the Committee carried out a detailed examination of the provisions of the ESF, including a visit to Brussels to secure additional information and to clarify questions of interpretation. Visits were also made to EEC countries and to Britain and Northern Ireland, to study retraining and resettlement arrangements there. The Committee found that the most characteristic feature of training in the Common Market countries was the development of accelerated vocational

training for adults, usually referred to as A.V.T. This was defined by the European Productivity Agency as:

the training of unskilled or semi-skilled workers, whether beginners or not, to prepare them for skilled and specialised employment. The training is provided in training centres, schools, groups and firms by competent instructors who have undergone special training in pedagogy for this purpose. Use is made of practical and active teaching methods and the main feature of the training is its strict time limit.(14)

In the Irish context such an approach would represent something of a watershed in the thinking on training for skilled employment and on apprenticeship. It presaged the beginning of a professional approach to training for work, as distinct from technical education, with this training taking place in training centres and schools. It would be delivered by trained instructors with the emphasis on skill acquisition through learning by doing. The criteria for competency would be based on a concept of standards reached, within an economic time-frame. It would go counter to the thinking in the DATI, shared by the Commission on Vocational Organisation, that it was a waste of public funds to spend money teaching skills in schools which could be better learnt in the work situation. By contrast with the traditional apprenticeship position, the craftsman on the shop-floor would no longer be the teacher and the shop floor would no longer be the learning situation. It would mean that anyone, of any age, who had the ability and the wish to do so, could acquire skilled status. It would, in effect, challenge many of the concepts associated with traditional apprenticeship: the concept that training for skilled occupations was a once off process, available only to young people; the long and fixed periods of time-serving; the notion of a once for all learning of a skill - now replaced by the



concept of life-long training to achieve flexibility and adaptability in a rapidly changing work situation. It was unlikely that the craft unions would accept the new approach without opposition; questions re the control of admission to training for skilled occupations, the numbers to be trained, what constituted the essential elements of a trade and, consequently, who did what in the workplace, arose from the proposals. There was the danger, also, that the European Productivity Agency, in putting so much reliance on an institutionalised approach to training, might have underestimated the contribution of the 'hidden curriculum' of the workplace to the training process. This would apply particularly to those core skills such as teamwork, communications, planning, work organisation and decision making, so essential to a skilled worker and best learned in the workplace.

A study of existing facilities for training, retraining, placement and resettlement of workers in Ireland was undertaken and information was obtained from organisations concerned with employment and employment promotion. Whether or not a semi-state body would qualify as 'a body under public law' for EEC purposes was also considered, and it was felt that this issue could be resolved satisfactorily. Even though action on Ireland's application had been suspended at a time when its work was at an advanced stage, 'the Committee proceeded on the basis that the problems as to industrial employment which arise in the future will be similiar to those which Ireland would encounter if a member of the EEC'.(15)

In assessing the adequacy of existing facilities in Ireland, the Committee had this to say in relation to the contribution that apprenticeship might make:

... an extension of apprenticeship training would offer no solution to the problems referred to ..... It would be impracticable for an adult worker who did not undergo apprenticeship training in his youth or who, having done so, finds his skill no longer in demand to acquire or re-acquire skilled status by apprenticeship means. The training or retraining of adult workers must be speedy, the aim being to return them to full wage-earning capacity as quickly as possible.(16)

The Committee did, however, recognise that, if A.V.T. to bring adults to skilled status was introduced, it would have to be operated so that there would be 'no clash between projects for adult retraining and the plans of An Cheard Chomhairle'. At that stage, therefore, the continued existence of that organisation as a separate body was envisaged. In drawing up its recommendations, the Committee were also aware that apprenticeship training did not, at that stage, qualify for ESF subvention.

Having considered its brief, the anticipated developments and existing facilities and structures, the Committee made thirty-four recommendations which in effect formed the basis of a comprehensive manpower policy. It also considered the administrative arrangements, including finance, needed to give effect to its proposals and made recommendations on these as well. Consideration was given to the allocation of overall responsibility to one Government Department, possibly a new Department of Labour. In the end, the Committee opted to recommend that responsibility for those initiatives which were seen as developments of existing schemes should remain, as heretofore, with the Departments of Industry and Commerce and of Social Welfare. Training using A.V.T. methods was seen as an entirely new concept, requiring premises, equipment, possible hostel accomodation for workers, trained instructors, new

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courses and extensive discussions and contacts with interested bodies. To undertake this element, it was recommended that a new State-sponsored body, representative of the appropriate Government Departments and of employers' and workers' organisations should be established.

The main recommendations of the Committee can be summarised as follows:(17)

labour forecasting: - the establishment of machinery for the systematic forecasting of labour needs and supply

training or retraining: - A.V.T. - accelerated vocational training - methods should be adopted as a supplementary means of training personnel for industry, with the setting-up of a new State-sponsored body for this purpose. This body would plan the development of A.V.T centres, modelled on what existed in modern industry, in selected areas, consult with An Cheard Chomhairle to prevent overlapping, and discuss with trade unions and employers' organisations the skills to be provided, the content of training courses and the status to be accorded to the trainees. Maintenance allowances, including travelling expenses, should be paid to trainees, these allowances to be at levels between unemployment benefits and minimum industrial wage rates. Trainees should be adults, with special consideration being given to redundant workers, or to those about to become so. Certificates should be awarded on completion of courses and the standard of training was to be so uniformly high as to be acceptable both to employers for employment, and to trade unions for membership

training and retraining on the job: - a grant of not more than 50% of normal wages should be paid to an employer

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in respect of the training of a redundant, and in some cases, of an unemployed worker, for a period of six months, where there was a reasonable prospect of permanent employment. Should attendance at a technical school be necessary as part of the training, the cost should be borne from public funds

advance training: - in consultation with the appropriate promotional bodies, advance training arrangements should be made to cater for the needs of new industrial projects

resettlement: - the Department of Social Welfare, as the resettlement authority, should have the power to pay resettlement expenses in respect of redundant or unemployed workers, who had to move to another location in order to secure employment, and where a suitable local worker was not available. The expenses should include travelling, household removal, settling-in, and, in certain cases, a lodging allowance

placement: - the Employment Service of the Department of Social Welfare should be strengthened to enable it to play a more positive role in the placement of redundant and unemployed workers

reconversion: - this involved the maintenance of wage levels, by the State, during the conversion of an enterprise to new production. The Committee was reluctant to recommend this and suggested that it should be examined again, if Ireland became a member of the EEC

finance: - it was considered that the most appropriate way of financing the costs to the State would be a tripartite arrangement, involving the Exchequer, the employers and

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the workers, the latter two paying through an addition to social insurance contributions, and the amount collected being transferred in bulk from the Social Insurance Fund.

The recommendations of this inter-departmental Committee were quite radical, in the context of existing Irish manpower policy, but were, of course, designed to attract the maximum financial support from the ESF when Ireland entered the EEC. On the other hand, there was little radical about the structures proposed to introduce them. Implementation of manpower policy would be divided between two government departments, Industry and Commerce and Social Welfare, and two semi-state bodies, the proposed new Training Authority and An Cheard Chomhairle. Industry and Commerce would be responsible for overall policy, with the new Training Authority and An Cheard Chomhairle reporting directly to it, and the Department of Social Welfare acting as its agent in relation to placement, resettlement and redundancy. However, the Committee did plant two new seeds which were to take root and eventually mature; the establishment of a body responsible for industrial training, and the concept of a training and employment levy. In addition, although it had rejected the establishment of an overall manpower authority, or a new government department for manpower affairs, it had raised the issue, and this was to be taken up again in the subsequent discussions on its Report.

#### **The White Paper on Manpower Policy - 1965.**

Following the submission of the Report of this Inter-Departmental Committee in 1963, the Government, in October, decided that it should be published, 'in order that it may be examined in consultation with interested bodies'. The Irish National Productivity Committee held a seminar on manpower

policy following which it made a submission to the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, in April 1964, recommending the establishment of a Manpower Authority and a Department of Labour. In July 1964, the National Industrial and Economic Council submitted a Report on Manpower Policy. In September, the Government set up the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Administrative Arrangements for Implementing Manpower Policy, which submitted its Report in March 1965. The recommendations of this second inter-departmental Committee, which, unlike its precursor, did not include Agriculture, followed closely those of the first Committee. It again recommended against the establishment of a separate Department of Labour, or an autonomous Manpower Authority, suggesting instead that the name of the Department of Industry and Commerce might be changed, 'to reflect its manpower responsibilities'. It did, however, make one significant recommendation in relation to apprenticeship which was, that the proposed new state training board should also undertake duties in respect of apprenticeship training, and 'The Board's functions should embrace the existing functions of An Cheard Chomhairle'.(18) The existence of a separate state authority for apprenticeship training was to end, and its functions would be subsumed into the new state training authority.

In July 1965, the National Industrial and Economic Council (NIEC) submitted its views on this latest Report. It disagreed with the proposal that the employment service should remain within the Department of Social Welfare feeling that a new positive image of the service was demanded and that 'this would be difficult within the existing tradition of the dole'. It also maintained that there must be close co-ordination of all aspects of manpower policy and that this could not be achieved with some aspects in Industry and Commerce and some in Social Welfare. It recommended that a single Manpower Agency

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should be set up under a new Ministry for Labour and that an Industrial Training Board should be established.

In October 1965, the Government's White Paper on Manpower Policy was published.(19) The main elements of this policy were:

- forecasting changes in the supply and demand for labour
- training and retraining of workers
- a suitable scheme of redundancy payments for workers
- a scheme of financial assistance for displaced workers
- development of the Employment Service (Social Welfare) to provide better information on job vacancies and worker availability, and an enhanced placement service
- the assignment to one agency of overall control and direction of the various elements to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the problem as a whole, - this agency to be responsible for the formation of policy in relation to the Employment Service.

The Government decided that overall responsibility should be assigned to the Minister for Industry and Commerce, in whose Department a National Manpower Agency (which would have a Manpower Forecasting Unit), had been established. It had also been decided that a Manpower Advisory Committee would be set up to assist the Agency in its work, this Committee to consist of representatives of the Federated Union of Employers and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. An expanded placement and guidance service would be provided by the Employment Service of the Department of Social Welfare for those seeking work. In

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addition, the educational authorities would develop a vocational guidance service for pupils.

Finally, the White Paper stated the Government's intention to establish a new Industrial Training Authority, 'with wide powers to deal with all aspects of industrial training, including apprenticeship training', and announced that the legislation to give effect to this decision was being prepared and would be introduced in the next Dail session. The Government appeared to accept the recommendations of the civil servants on both inter-departmental Committees and decided against setting up a new Department of Labour. However, it is interesting to note that, whereas the Bill for the new Industrial Training Authority was introduced in the Dail by the Minister for Industry and Commerce, in 1966, by the time it had reached the Committee Stage, later in that year, a new Department of Labour had been established, and the Bill had become the responsibility of the new Minister for Labour, Dr. Hillery. (The original Department of Labour, established by the first Dail in 1919, with Countess Markievicz as the first Minister for Labour, had been demoted 'to a mere section of the Department of Industry and Commerce' by W. T. Cosgrave, in August, 1922.) (20)

#### **The Industrial Training Bill, 1965:**

The purpose of the Bill was to give effect to the Government's proposal in the White Paper on Manpower Policy to establish a new industrial training authority, An Chomhairle Traenala, with wide powers to deal with all aspects of industrial and commercial training. The word 'Treanala' was later changed to 'Oiliuna' following the debates on the Bill in the Oireachtas, where one deputy remarked that the word treanala 'sticks in my gullet' while a senator stated that the word did not appear in



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Dineen's Irish Dictionary. The new Authority would have the duty to provide, and promote the provision of training, for persons for any activity of industry or commerce, or of a trade or occupation. However, the primary production activities of agriculture, horticulture and fishing were specifically excluded, as was any activity of a professional occupation. The following types of training were envisaged for the new body:

adult retraining to skilled level by A.V.T.

operative training and retraining

training of unemployed and redundant workers

refresher training for workers to up-date their skills

training of agricultural workers for other occupations

advance training of workers for new industrial projects

training of instructors, supervisors, technicians etc.

In pursuance of its training brief, An Chomhairle could undertake a wide range of functions. These included the provision of, or securing the provision of, training courses, the approval of courses or of training facilities, assisting persons seeking training and the payment of allowances to them. It could also undertake research, set standards, apply tests, and award certificates, scholarships and prizes. In relation to the provision of training courses or facilities, regard had to be given to what was already available, to avoid duplication, particularly with the vocational education sector.

An Chomhairle had the power to make an industrial training order designating an industry for training purposes, and could

then constitute a representative industrial training committee. Following consultation with this committee, a training levy could be imposed on its employers. The purpose of this levy was to ensure that, as far as was practicable, the cost of training in the industry would be equitably shared amongst all its employers. An appeals procedure was provided for, and some small firms could be exempted from the levy, which was subject to confirmation by the Minister, and which could be revoked by either House of the Oireachtas. Equity was to be attained by making grants to employers in respect of the amount and quality of training which they provided for their employees. Each industrial levy-grant scheme was to be a separate entity, with separate accounts and no cross subsidisation between designated industries. However, provision could be made for a contribution from the levy funds to the administration costs of An Chomhairle. It was also proposed that An Chomhairle should eventually take over the functions of An Foras Tionscal (later the IDA) and the Shannon Free Airport Development Company in relation to the making of grants for the training of workers in new industries.

The Industrial Training Bill made provision for the repeal of the Apprenticeship Act, 1959, and for the transfer to An Chomhairle Oiliuma of the functions of An Cheard Chomhairle. It would have powers, similar to those contained in the 1959 Act, to make legally enforceable rules governing all aspects of the recruitment and training of apprentices. However, any industrial training committees established by the new body could not make apprenticeship rules, their role being solely to advise and assist. The transitional arrangements provided that any apprenticeship rules and orders made under the 1959 Act were to remain in force until amended or revoked by the new body. In addition, the apprenticeship committees which had been set up by An Cheard Chomhairle were to continue to operate, for the time being, as industrial training committees.

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Apart, however, from the question of removing the powers to make certain rules from the committees, the provisions in relation to apprenticeship in the Bill were essentially the same as those contained in the 1959 Act. The rules which could be made by the new body, following consultation with the appropriate industrial training committee, were those relating to:

minimum age of entry to apprenticeship

educational entry qualifications

apprentice dismissal

period of apprenticeship, including probationary period

training

prohibition of premiums

form of contract

the keeping of apprenticeship records.

The Bill also defined an apprentice as, 'a person employed by way of apprenticeship in a designated industrial activity' but did not define 'employment by way of apprenticeship' leaving this to the normally accepted concept. However, the Bill did provide that:

An Chomhairle may by regulations made under this section declare that every person employed in a particular manner in a designated industrial activity by a particular employer shall be deemed to be an apprentice for the purposes of this Act.(21)

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The purpose of this provision was to counteract evasions by some employers, under the 1959 Act, who referred to apprentices as 'trainees' or 'helpers' and refused to comply with the rules.(22)

Provision was also made in the Bill, as in the 1959 Act, for the publication of notice of intention to make rules, for the requirement to obtain consent before taking on an apprentice, for the notification of the commencement, or termination of an apprenticeship, for the maintenance of a register and for the release, during working hours and without loss of pay, of apprentices for technical education. Penalties were provided for, in cases where persons were successfully prosecuted for breach of apprenticeship rules, and these were much more substantial than those which had existed under the 1959 Act. There was, however, a new offence, which related to the newly introduced concept of A.V.T. An Chomhairle, in order to ensure the provision of a sufficient number of trained persons to meet the requirements of an activity of industry, could arrange with an employer to employ a particular person who had successfully undergone a training course, provided or approved by An Chomhairle, and which was suited to that employment. Any person who obstructed such an arrangement could, on conviction, be liable to a fine of £1000 and a further fine of £100 per day for each day the offence was continued. The same penalty was provided for where a similar arrangement, in respect of an apprentice, was obstructed. The severity of the deterrent was designed to counter any attempt by individuals or vested interests to obstruct the State training authority from ensuring that industrial development would not be hampered by shortages of workers with particular skills.

As in the case of An Cheard Chomhairle, the Minister was required to appoint the representatives nominated by I.C.T.U. as members of both the Council of An Chomhairle and of the

Industrial Training Committees. This system of I.C.T.U. nomination was originally established in the Industrial Relations Act, 1946. In the case of the employer nominations, however, the Minister could select the appointees. A new departure was that the educational representatives on both the Council and the Committees were now entitled to vote. It was felt that this was desirable on the grounds that the Bill covered the full field of manpower training, in which the education authorities and the general public had no less an interest than workers' and employers' organisations.(23) The Bill proposed that the composition of the Council of An Chomhairle Oiliuna should be a Chairman (who could be part-time or whole-time) and six members: two employer, two trade union (one craft and one general union), one educational representative and one representative of the Minister. This contrasted with the Board of An Cheard Chomhairle which had, in all, a Chairman and thirteen members. The reasons given for the change were, that a smaller and more compact body would be in a better position to reach decisions more quickly, and to act effectively. It was also felt that pressure of work made it increasingly difficult to obtain persons of the right calibre to serve on State boards.(24) Under An Cheard Chomhairle, the authorised officers for the enforcement of apprenticeship statutory orders came from the Factory Inspectorate; the new Bill proposed that in future training advisors should have both advisory and enforcement functions. As regards trade disputes and apprentices, it was felt that the new Bill could give better protection to apprentices involved in a strike situation. The advice of the Attorney General was that the effect of a strike on an apprentice's contract would normally be that he had broken his agreement, and would be unable to insist that he should be allowed to complete his apprenticeship. As An Chomhairle could establish its own training centres, which would be used mainly for adult training and retraining courses, special courses could be held in these

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centres for apprentices, whose apprenticeships were interrupted by a trade dispute.(25)

In relation to the making of industrial training orders, the normal procedure envisaged in the Bill was for An Chomhairle, in the first instance, to carry out appropriate consultations with interested bodies. It would then bring the industry within the scope of the Bill by means of an industrial training order. An industrial training committee would be set up to assist and advise on the training problems in the industry. In the absence of an industrial training order, An Chomhairle could not impose a levy, nor could it regulate apprenticeship in the industry, except by virtue of the transitional arrangements, where the trade had already been designated under the Apprenticeship Act, 1959. On the other hand, the Bill would give power to An Chomhairle to undertake a whole range of activities such as training and retraining, including A.V.T., the provision of training centres, the payment of training allowances, including allowances to persons undergoing training abroad, to provide scholarships and undertake research, immediately on its establishment. It was felt that the process of designating industries could take a considerable time, and there was an urgent need to get operations under way with all possible speed. It should be noted, also, that the Committees established under the Apprenticeship Act were to be retained until the new industrial training committees were formed.

**Comments of An Cheard Chomhairle on the Industrial Training Bill, 1965:**

In its Final Report, covering the period April, 1966, to May, 1967, An Cheard Chomhairle made a brief assessment of what had been achieved since its establishment in 1959.(26) It considered that the policies contained in its Statement of

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Policy on Basic Conditions for a Sound Apprenticeship, drawn up in 1960, were almost universally accepted by industry. It had tackled all the trades which appeared to call for statutory regulation at that stage, and had established a framework of control for these through Apprenticeship Committees. The only outstanding elements were the training rules for the trades of printing and dental craftsman, and these were in hand.

All this had been achieved in an atmosphere of harmony between the Board, the various Apprenticeship Committees, organisations of employers, workers and the educational authorities.(27)

What still needed to be done was the establishment of satisfactory on-the-job and school training, and, 'while very valuable progress has been made under these heads, much remains to be done'.

In a Memorandum,(28) the Board set out its views on apprenticeship in the context of the new Industrial Training Bill. It was concerned that the new body would be much less representative, (six members as against thirteen), than An Cheard Chomhairle, while at the same time it would have much wider responsibilities. It stated that its experience had been that its own comparatively broad representation:

had been an important factor in securing the willing acceptance by both sides of industry of controls which, even though backed by statutory powers, would be difficult if not impossible to operate without the goodwill of those concerned. The breadth of experience embodied in its members and the extensive contacts in industry and in the educational field have been invaluable ... (29)

It had found that the size of the Apprenticeship Board had never impeded its speed of action. The second point made in the Memorandum was that the proposed new body, being responsible for all forms of industrial training, 'could only devote a fraction of its time to apprenticeship', and this would be insufficient to handle the many problems adequately. It was suggested that, for these reasons and also to make use of its accumulated experience of apprenticeship, it should continue in existence as currently constituted, to look after apprenticeship in conjunction with An Chomhairle Oiliuna. It could act as an advisory committee on apprenticeship, and it should be a requirement that no action on matters relating to apprenticeship would be taken by An Chomhairle Oiliuna without the consent of this advisory committee. In particular, it felt it would be desirable:

that in matters relating to skilled trades, such as adult training to skilled level, Chomhairle Treanala (Oiliuna) policy should be determined only after consultation with An Cheard Chomhairle.(30)

The matter was pressed at a meeting with the Minister for Labour, Dr. Hillery, by a deputation from the Board of An Cheard Chomhairle. The Minister announced that the membership of the proposed new Council had been increased from six to thirteen, thus giving the broad representation suggested by An Cheard Chomhairle. It was put to the Minister that, if apprenticeship were to receive full attention, it should be the sole concern of the Board charged with looking after it, and not one of its many responsibilities. The Minister was not prepared to accept that An Cheard Chomhairle should be retained as an advisory body to An Chomhairle Oiliuna. However, he did agree to introduce an amendment to the Bill which would give the new Council the power to appoint advisory committees, one of which could be on apprenticeship matters, to which



members of An Cheard Chomhairle could be appointed.(31) In fact, what eventually transpired was that, at the second meeting of An Chomhairle Oiliuna, the Council appointed seven sub-committees, one of which was a General Committee on Apprenticeship Training. There were seven members of the Council on this Committee, five of whom had been on the Board of An Cheard Chomhairle.

It was obvious that the Board of An Cheard Chomhairle was concerned that the further development of apprenticeship would be retarded somewhat by becoming just one of the many responsibilities of An Chomhairle Oiliuna. The intention to train adults to skilled level, using accelerated vocational training methods (A.V.T.), was also seen as something that could cause complications and tensions at apprentice, craftsman and trade union level, if, indeed, it was not a covert attack on traditional apprenticeship. As far as the craft unions were concerned, having just one representative on the Council of An Chomhairle Oiliuna, as was originally proposed in the Bill, would have given them very little influence on policy matters. This latter point was resolved when the Minister, following representations, had increased the membership of the Council from six to thirteen members. The decision taken at the meeting with the Minister to provide for advisory sub-committees, and the subsequent establishment by the Council of the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training ensured that apprenticeship had a high priority at Council level. This Committee, although it had no executive powers, met regularly and handled all routine apprenticeship matters while it remained in existence. In fact, when the Council decided to review the apprenticeship system, it became the Select Committee on apprenticeship review. In relation to apprenticeship and accelerated vocational training (A.V.T.), the Minister, conscious of the difficulties that might arise,

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made the following points in his Dail speech on the Industrial Training Bill:

There is a point about apprenticeship and accelerated vocational training which I should like to put in perspective. There is no question of abolishing the apprenticeship system as the means of producing skilled workers. Neither is there any question of flooding the skilled trades with adult trainees. The apprenticeship system must be expanded and, despite the work which has been done over the past few years, must be further improved and modernised. It will remain the principal way of producing skilled workers, but it will no longer be the only way of doing so.(32)

There is no doubt that apprenticeship benefited enormously from becoming a responsibility of An Chomhairle Oiliuna (AnCO) in preference to retaining its own separate Board. The development by AnCO of modern, well-equipped industrial training centres with skilled instructors, which were to provide off-the-job training for apprentices, the expertise of its curriculum development unit, and the availability of research facilities were all to play an important role in its development. In addition, the levy grant schemes promoted apprenticeship within industry by providing grants for the recruitment of apprentices, for off-the-job courses and for educational release. Later, when ESF funds became available for apprenticeship training, it was possible, not only to recruit and train additional apprentices to meet projected shortages, but to plan the extension of off-the-job training in their first year to all apprentices. Finally, when the oil crises and the recessions caused large scale unemployment, AnCO, with ESF funding, was able to provide special training in its training centres, in industrial firms, in vocational schools and on community youth programmes to help unemployed apprentices

continue their training. Had An Cheard Chomhairle been retained as the responsible body, it is unlikely that development on such a scale would have resulted. On the debit side, however, apprenticeship did tend to absorb a considerable amount of the time of the Council and of the craft based industrial training committees of AnCO. It was seen by some as an old-fashioned form of training, not amenable to a 'high tech' approach, and, ultimately, as having too high a profile among the wide range of training activities for which AnCO was responsible. In addition, the interplay of the many vested interests involved made the management of the system a difficult and challenging operation.

**Dail Debate:**

When the Bill was introduced to the Dail, industrial training was the responsibility of the Department of Industry and Commerce, and the second reading was moved by its Parliamentary Secretary, Deputy Sean Flanagan, on 26 May 1966. By the time the Committee Stage had been reached, in December, the Department of Labour had been established and the remaining stages were taken by its Minister, Dr. Patrick Hillery, who now had responsibility for the emerging manpower policy, of which the Industrial Training Bill was the first instalment. In introducing the Second Stage, Deputy Flanagan said that the Bill rested on five main propositions:

the importance of investment in skills and know-how of people

the primary responsibility for training workers rested on the people who employ them

training costs should be shared equitably amongst employers in industry

in a changing technological and economic era, training had to be continuing and not once off

all persons should have the opportunity of improving their skills to achieve a better standard of living.

He commented on the lack of interest by employers in training, on the rigidity of existing training schemes, which he saw as damaging to individuals as well as to the economy, and said that there were 'too many jobs to which a man cannot aspire if he was not wise enough or lucky enough to enter one of them immediately after leaving school'.(33) Although the Bill provided for training in any activity of industry or commerce, the new authority was expected to give priority to industrial needs, and it was unlikely that it would be in a position to do much in the commercial field for a considerable time. Duplication was to be avoided, although it was expected that the new body would help existing training organisations, such as the VECs, CERT and the Irish Management Institute to do a better job. In relation to the Management Institute, the Parliamentary Secretary had this to say:

An Chomhairle will not concern itself directly within management training, but again there may be many opportunities for co-operation and co-ordination between An Chomhairle and the Institute.(34)

Apprenticeship training was to form an integral part of the general training programme of an industry, and 'it would be a bad mistake to deal with the training of apprentices as if it were a thing apart'. Accelerated vocational training (A.V.T.) was seen as having both economic and social advantages. On the

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one hand, it would help to overcome shortages of labour, especially those requiring a rapid response, but it would also provide opportunities for suitably qualified persons to enter occupations that were closed to them because they did not get apprenticeships immediately after leaving school. It would supplement, but not replace, the apprenticeship system, and the numbers trained, and the occupations covered, would be decided by agreement in the industrial training committees. One deputy saw its introduction as 'the end of the craft trades, not this year but in the next decade', while others felt that it would be resisted by the craft unions.

The introduction of the levy/grant was to be a powerful weapon in the hands of the Training Authority, the levies would equalise the training costs of employers in the industry, while the basis for the grants:

will be that employers who meet their training responsibilities in full will be refunded the full amount of the levy; those who do more than their share will get a grant which will exceed the amount of the levy paid; those who do less than their fair share of training will get a grant less than the amount of the levy paid; those who do no training at all will not receive a grant and will suffer in full the loss of the levy paid.(35)

It was to be a stick and carrot approach, according to the Parliamentary Secretary, but, as one deputy remarked, 'the carrot became the stick'.

It was expected that the development of industrial training centres, which, initially, would undertake experimental training and retraining, would involve the State in heavy expenditure. This the Government was prepared to undertake because of the key role of training in the development of the

economy. In welcoming the Bill, Deputy Patrick Donegan (Fine Gael), referring to the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement and to the reduction of tariffs that commenced in July, 1966, remarked that it was not an entirely satisfactory approach but it is:

the only way by which we can look ourselves in the face, that we should do our best to see that those, whom by our political actions we have displaced, should have the opportunity to have themselves trained to go into other and perhaps better jobs.(36)

Deputy Sean Treacy (Labour) regarded the Bill as the first step in an overall manpower policy but the real problem, as he saw it, was 'the creation of the industrial and economic climate in which a manpower policy can operate', and such a policy could only operate effectively in a bouyant economy in which there was full or near full employment.

Between the Second and the Committee Stages of the Bill there were two significant developments. Firstly, the establishment of the Department of Labour, which has already been referred to. Secondly, there was a repeat of the procedure adopted with the 1959 Apprenticeship Act, the Bill was referred to a joint committee of employer organisations and ICTU, for examination and comments. When the Committee Stage was moved by Dr. Hillery there were forty amendments put down by the Minister, many of them agreed recommendations of the joint committee. Some were to close loopholes which had become apparent in the operation of the Apprenticeship Act, others related to the composition of the Council of An Chomhairle, the voting rights of educational members, and the question of a quorum for the Council. Quite a number were drafting and administrative amendments which did not affect the substance of the Bill. As with the 1959 Bill, the fact that it had been referred to the Joint Committee, and that the agreed recommendations had been accepted by the

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Minister as amendments, greatly facilitated its passage through the Dail, and all stages were passed on 14 December, 1966. One issue, raised by Deputy Denis Larkin (Labour), was the exclusion of agriculture from the scope of the Bill and this was to be aired further in the Seanad.

### Senate Debate:

In the debate there, Senator James Dooge moved an amendment that the activities of primary production in agriculture, horticulture and fishing should come within the scope of the Bill and should not be excluded as was proposed. He argued, and was supported by Senator Garret Fitzgerald, that, whereas their exclusion might have been acceptable in the context of legislation introduced by a Minister for Industry and Commerce, its exclusion by a Ministry of Labour, responsible for overall manpower policy, was :

a failure to realise the importance of integration in the whole policy of manpower development and manpower training. .... and I think the idea that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries can be left apart in matters of this sort - that they have a little corner, a cabbage garden of their own which can be isolated from the remainder of our workforce - is an out of date idea.(37)

Senator Fitzgerald considered that it was retrogressive to think in terms of 'segregating agriculture as if it were not an industry, as if it were in some way separate from economic activity'.(38) This he considered to be part of the mentality which treated agriculture as a way of life and nothing more. The Minister's response was that the entire question of agricultural training and education was being reviewed, and that he would discuss with the responsible Minister the

possibility of having a corresponding body established to deal with training in the primary processes of agriculture. During the debate there was a reaction from Senator Fitzgerald to a remark that the matter had been agreed between the Government and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and was, therefore, best left alone. He rejected any suggestion that the Dail and the Senate might have no competence in anything that had been so agreed. Senator Dooge's amendment was pressed to a vote and was lost.

The question of technician training was also discussed and the possibility of the duplication of the activities of professional bodies and the Regional Technical Colleges. The Minister stated that An Chomhairle would undertake technician training only where this was 'clearly necessary and after full consultation with all the interests concerned'.(39) Senator Sheehy Skeffington wanted the Bill to regulate pay scales for apprentices and also that, in the recruitment of apprentices, 'no question of family relationship shall be considered relevant'. Both of these amendments were withdrawn. In a debate conducted in Irish, the Minister agreed to accept an amendment, again from Senator Dooge, to change the name of the Authority to be set up under the Bill from An Chomhairle Treanala to An Chomhairle Oiliuna and remarked that 'Oiliuna' sounded more musical than 'Treanala', but he doubted if it was as accurate!

The Industrial Training Bill, 1965, completed its passage through both Houses of the Oireachtas on 28 February, 1967, and the Industrial Training Act became law on 7 March of that year.(40)



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**The Establishment of AnCO - The Industrial Training Authority:**

AnCO was established by the Minister for Labour on 15 May, 1967. Its first Chairman was Mr Michael Killeen, later to become Chief Executive of the IDA, and its Director was Mr. Brian McManus, a civil servant from the Department of Labour. At its first meeting, the Minister, Dr. Hillery, commented:

A truly massive expansion of training must be undertaken. New ground will have to be broken and problems, old and new, must be overcome.(41)

AnCO set out its aims as follows:

the Irish workforce at all levels from management to operative will receive training to the highest international standards

training facilities and methods will at least keep pace with those in other countries

workers will be able to acquire new skills to enable them to move from declining industries to new jobs

all persons with the will and capacity to do so, will be assisted to become more skilful at their work. This would increase productivity, workers' earning power and job satisfaction

the cost of training shared equitably within each industry.

It was planned to achieve these aims: by intensifying and expanding apprenticeship training as initiated by An Cheard Chomhairle; by providing for the training and retraining of

adult workers, including workers leaving the land, through the establishment of new training centres, and the expansion of education and training courses at vocational schools, colleges and training institutes; by setting up representative Industrial Training Committees which would be consulted on the training needs of their industries, and how these should be met; by the introduction of levy/grant schemes to stimulate training and distribute the costs of this equitably within industry; by undertaking pilot projects to meet critical shortages of workers and gain experience in the development of new training methods. It was intended to make full use of existing facilities including spare training capacity in industry.(42)

At the second meeting of the Council of AnCO, held on 14 July, 1967, seven sub-committees of its own members were set up to examine in depth the areas assigned to them. These were:

Apprenticeship Training

Research and Development

Training Facilities

Regional Organisation

Pilot Projects

Organisation and Finance

Publicity and Information.

The Apprenticeship Training sub-committee consisted of seven members of the Council, five of whom had been members of the Board of An Cheard Chomhairle. It was chaired by Mr. Martin

Gleeson, CEO, City of Dublin VEC. and held its first meeting on 29 June, 1967. This sub-committee, named the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training, had no executive powers but acted in an advisory capacity to the Council. It had regular meetings and handled routine apprenticeship matters, operating, initially at any rate, in much the same way as An Cheard Chomhairle. It was later to become a Select Committee with responsibility for the review of the apprenticeship system.

In its First Annual Report, 1967/68, AnCO gave the number of registered apprentices as 12,349 made up as follows:

Building Trades:	4000.	Furniture Trades:	475.
Dental Craftsman:	45.	Motor Trade:	2886.
Electrical Trades:	2100.	Printing:	734.
Engineering Trades:	2100.	<u>Total:</u>	<u>12349.</u>

Attendance at day and block release totalled 7942, the majority of apprentices attending day release classes. In relation to apprenticeship training generally, the Report stated:

Unfortunately, the majority of the 12,349 registered apprentices are not getting adequate training on or off the job at the present time. The reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs are numerous; they include inadequate facilities in many workshops and technical schools, and in some cases inadequate collaboration by employers. A further defect in the present system is that any apprentice who has served his five years apprenticeship, whether he passes an examination or not,

gets craftsman status. This reduces the incentive to master the trade in theory and practice.(43)

AnCO had also retained, in a voluntary advisory role, the seven statutory National Apprenticeship Committees set up under the 1959 Apprenticeship Act. These continued to extend and consolidate the work of the old Apprenticeship Board, and considered and advised on amendments to the training rules, applications for entry to apprenticeship, the provision of technical school courses, etc. They remained in existence until 1969/70, when they were all phased out, with the exception of that for the trade of Dental Craftsman. At that stage, six new Industrial Training Committees (ITCs) had been set up for the the newly designated industries of Textiles, Engineering, Construction, Clothing/Footwear, Food/Drink/Tobacco and Printing/Paper. The engineering, electrical and motor trades became the responsibility of the Engineering ITC, the construction and furniture trades that of the Construction ITC and the printing trades that of the Printing and Paper ITC. Sub-committees were set up under each ITC to cater for the specialised field of apprenticeship training.(44)

#### **New Initiatives in Apprenticeship:**

In the period 1967 to 1970, as the voluntary Apprenticeship Committees continued and consolidated the work begun by the old Apprenticeship Board, at another level, that of the Council of AnCO and the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training which it had set up, a critical examination of the apprenticeship system was taking place, and a number of new initiatives were being considered. At its third meeting on 13 July 1967, Dr. J.D. Barry, Deputy Principal, College of Technology, Bolton St. Dublin, presented a paper to the Council entitled 'Trends of Change', in which he discussed the

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complementary roles of education and training in apprenticeship and advocated a common basic first year apprentice course for all engineering trades.(45) Dr. Barry, who himself had started as an engineering apprentice at Fords in Cork, had secured a Ph.D., and was later to become Principal of the College. In November of the same year, the Council considered an application from CIE for a grant towards the cost of a new centre, to provide off-the-job training for its apprentices in the engineering, electrical and motor trades. The application was approved provided that:

CIE agreed to take in apprentices from other firms

the training centre would be seen as a joint AnCO/CIE initiative

there would be a joint management team

AnCO would approve the course content. (46)

Although there were objections from some motor trade employers, and from trade union and educational interests, the AnCO/CIE Apprentice Training Centre opened in 1969, and provided full time off-the-job training, of three years duration in a modern well-equipped industrial training centre for 168 apprentices. AnCO financed the equipment; CIE provided the building and staff. The annual intake was 45, 18 of whom were sponsored by AnCO. In a reference to this development, the 3rd Annual Report of AnCO stated:

This centre, as well as our own, is of importance as a demonstration of an alternative to the traditional system of apprentice training and is similiar to systems used successfully in Europe.(47)

The period of off-the-job training in this centre was later reduced from three years to one, both on the grounds of cost and that three years off-the-job tended to institutionalise the apprentices, and reduce their exposure to the pressures of shop floor conditions.

Amongst the issues which concerned the Council and its Apprenticeship Committee, in its early years, was that of the syllabi for the trade examinations of the Department of Education. There was, firstly, the question of bringing these into line with the various trade training rules approved by An Cheard Chomhairle, and secondly, it was felt that they needed to be revised and brought up to date. Views were also expressed that the City and Guilds syllabi were more in line with modern technological developments, and that Department of Education certificates tended to be regarded as inferior to those of the City and Guilds.(48) It was decided to re-constitute the Educational Liaison Committee, which had existed under the Apprenticeship Board, with the tasks of establishing a direct relationship between the training rules and the Department's trade examinations, and of reviewing apprentice educational entry qualifications. The concept of the LINK courses was also considered. These were a form of privately organised correspondence courses, in which some vocational teachers acted as tutors, and were intended to provide an educational link between one block release course and the next. They were used by a number of the semi-state bodies mainly for their electrical apprentices, although there were also carpentry and joinery LINK courses. However, there was no general extension of this development.

The question of certification was also considered. This was a long-standing apprenticeship issue, mainly because the craft unions recognised as craftsmen apprentices who had 'served their time', irrespective of whether or not they had passed

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their trade examinations. The need for the proper certification of craftsmen had been recognised in the 1931 and in the 1959 Apprenticeship Acts but efforts to introduce it had failed due mainly to the attitude of the craft unions. At its 5th. meeting on 19 March, 1968, the Committee on Apprenticeship Training had forwarded the following recommendation to the AnCO Council:

That An Chomhairle consider issuing a form of Certification as from September 1969, to apprentices who have completed their apprenticeships, passed the Senior Trade Examination and for whose proficiency the Senior Supervisor for their trade can vouch.(49)

What happened in effect was that AnCO eventually issued a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship to apprentices who had served the full period of apprenticeship, and certification on the basis of examination results and of proficiency remained a problem to be addressed again later. Part of the difficulty was the legal position of an apprentice, once the probationary period had been completed, and there was also the problem that many apprentices did not enter for the Senior Trade examinations and the success rate, in the case of those who did, was poor, initially at least.

The question of responsibility for Ireland's participation in the International Apprentice Competitions also arose. These Competitions, since Ireland's participation began, in 1957, had been the preserve of the Department of Education, although An Cheard Chomhairle had been involved to some extent. The Committee on Apprenticeship felt that AnCO, as the national authority responsible for apprenticeship, should now take control. However, although AnCO was given representation on some of the organising committees, and was given observer status at the Competitions, control remained firmly with the Department of Education, officers of which continued to

represent Ireland on the international organising committee. AnCO did, however, contribute to the training and selection of apprentices in preparation for the Competitions, and funded some of the costs of a special course in Gormanston College, for apprentices selected to compete in the competitions in Brussels in 1969.

Co-operation between the educational sector and AnCO was further strengthened, in the Dublin area, by the establishment of a liaison committee, representing the Department of Education, the Dublin City VEC and AnCO, initially to ensure effective harmonisation of the arrangements for the practical and theoretical training of apprentices, but later expanded to include all forms of training of interest to the three bodies concerned. Among the initiatives taken were the provision of scholarships for the training of furniture and printing apprentices to technician level.

As has already been stated, the voluntary Apprenticeship Committee for the trade of Dental Craftsman continued to operate, after the statutory National Apprenticeship Committees were phased out in 1969. An issue which arose in this Committee was referred to the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training, and was considered at its meeting on 29 September, 1969. It was stated that there was 'considerable opposition by trade union representatives on the Apprenticeship Committee to the registration by AnCO of female apprentices to the trade of dental craftsman', and it was claimed that 'it was the policy of the ITGWU to oppose the entry of females to the trade'.(50) Although there was provision for females in the Brush and Broom trade (where they had a shorter period of apprenticeship), and in the Furniture trades (as upholsterers and french polishers), in general there was opposition from the craft unions to the entry of female apprentices. As the equality movement got under way, this resistance was to be



gradually broken down. It was surprising, however, that one of the general unions, which tended to be more liberal in their attitudes, should have raised such objections at that stage.

**Industrial Training Centres and Apprenticeship:**

The development of the AnCO Training Centre network, initially for the training and retraining of adults, provided the opportunity to experiment with first year off-the-job courses for apprentices. The first three Centres, located in factory type premises, provided by the Shannon Free Airport Development Company and the Industrial Development Authority, on the Industrial Estates at Shannon, Waterford and Galway, commenced operations in July 1968, September 1968 and November 1969 respectively. Between them, these Centres had 600 training places, and these were to be further augmented by the opening of a 350 place, purpose-built Centre in Ballyfermot, Dublin, in February, 1972. Before recommending the introduction of apprentice off-the-job training in AnCO Centres on an experimental basis, members of the Apprenticeship Committee had, in 1968, visited industrial training centres in Northern Ireland. Then, in January 1969, the Committee considered a proposal to introduce off-the-job training for 350 apprentices on a pilot basis, in the existing Training Centres in Galway and Waterford, and in the Centre planned for Dublin at Ballyfermot. The training activity in the Centres would be concerned solely with skill training, the educational content to be provided by the technical schools. This initiative was seen as having a threefold role for AnCO:(51)

- (a) provide a limited number of training places (less than 10% of the population of 1st. year apprentices) - where there are known shortages

(b) conduct research into the recruitment, induction and training of 1st. year apprentices

(c) publicise career opportunities in the trades.

The apprentices to be recruited would be employees of, and paid by AnCO, although employers could sponsor if they wished. They would be selected from a wide geographical area to facilitate placement as 2nd. year apprentices, after initial training. Aptitude tests would be used as an aid to selection, the Junior Trade examinations would be taken, and an accommodation subsidy would be paid. Costs would be met from the levy funds of the appropriate industries as soon as levy/grant schemes were in operation. It was expected that the apprentice places in the Centres would act as a buffer against shortfalls in intake in particular trades. Simulated industrial conditions would apply in the Centres, and it was planned to encourage visits by industrialists, and in-firm craft instructors, to observe formal simulated training methods. It was hoped to develop cohesion between the educational and training elements, and to enable instructors and trade teachers to study a field of mutual involvement. It was felt that the range of trades taught in the Centres would enable apprentices to receive a sound insight and appreciation of other trades, and that instruction in 'industrial citizenship' could take place. Finally, it was intended that the experiment would provide:

The ability to study accelerated training methods which will be a guide to any considered change in apprenticeship procedure.(52)

Off-the-job training for apprentices began in the Galway Training Centre in July, 1969, in the Waterford Training Centre in October, 1969, and in the Dublin Training Centre in April, 1972. Courses were provided for the main construction trades of

bricklaying, plastering, painting/decorating and carpentry/joinery, and for the engineering, electrical and motor trades. In all, about 350 apprentices were catered for in this experimental stage. The apprentice instructors were themselves qualified craftsmen with industrial experience, who had received appropriate training in AnCO's own Instructor Training Centre, and, in some cases, in Northern Ireland Government Training Centres. A newly established Curriculum Development Unit assisted with the provision of suitable curricula for off-the-job training. Arrangements were made with local VECs for educational release, and apprentices were prepared for the Junior Trade examinations, with excellent results. Representative local advisory committees were established for the Centres in Shannon, Galway and Waterford. In Waterford, apprentices attended the new Regional Technical College for their educational release classes.

The Shannon Training Centre was not involved in the initial programme of off-the-job training for apprentices, but did undertake a number of special apprenticeship schemes for foreign industrial firms establishing in the Shannon/Limerick region. These included the training of thirty first year apprentices for the ill-fated Ferenka factory, the general manager of which was Dr. Tiede Herrema, who had a deep interest in apprenticeship, and who was very supportive of the scheme. Sixteen toolmaking apprentices were sponsored by AnCO at the Centre in an effort to increase the number of toolmakers, who were in short supply nationally, and for whom there was a demand from new industries. In fact, this was one of the trades for which the Department of Labour sought to attract qualified Irish emigrants to return from abroad. The apprentices were later transferred to the Sligo RTC, which had been designated as the national centre for toolmaking apprentices, to continue their training. In the 1969/70 period, a joint scheme for the training of aeronautical apprentices for Aer Lingus was

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organised by the Centre, in conjunction with the Shannon Comprehensive School.

### **Role of the Regional Technical Colleges:**

Parallel with these initiatives on the training side, significant developments were taking place in the educational sphere, in the area of technical education, which were also to impact on apprentice training. In September, 1966, a Steering Committee on Technical Education was set up by the Minister for Education to advise him generally on technical education, and, in particular, to provide a brief for the development of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs). At this stage, a decision had already been taken to build eight RTCs, at Cork, Limerick, (not proceeded with), Waterford, Galway, Sligo, Dundalk, Athlone and Carlow, and the Committee was asked to advise on the need for a ninth college in Letterkenny.(53) In considering its brief, the Steering Committee felt that:

the main long-term function of the Colleges will be to educate for trade and industry over a broad spectrum of occupations ranging from craft to professional level, notably in engineering and science but also in commercial, linguistic and other specialities.(54)

The courses to be provided should, in the first instance, aim at filling gaps in the industrial manpower structure, particularly at technical level, (an area which, up to now, had largely catered for persons who had progressed to this level from craftsman status, mainly through attendance at evening technical classes). In relation to apprentice education, the

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Committee assumed that the Colleges would provide courses at Junior and Senior Trade Certificate level, on day or block release, for local apprentices, and on block release for apprentices from a wider area, possibly on a regional, or, in some cases, on a national basis. It considered, too, that there might be a demand from AnCO for adult education courses as part of its adult retraining programme.

The Steering Committee concluded that, because of the major growth envisaged for apprentice education, and the existing shortage of facilities in technical schools, large scale provision for apprentice courses would have to be made in RTCs. Many of the smaller vocational schools could provide junior apprentice courses, but the bulk of instruction at senior stage would take place in RTCs. It was estimated that there would be an overall national requirement of educational facilities for 11,000 apprentices. In the event, this turned out to be an underestimate, as apprentice release attendances peaked at 14,482 in 1982, though it dropped back later.(55) An interesting long term development in relation to apprentice education in the RTCs was that the technical education of third and fourth year apprentices was eventually accorded third level status.

Relevant to the role of the RTCs and the educational sector in the practical training of apprentices, was a feasibility study, undertaken at the request of the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training, on the running of off-the-job courses for apprentices, in the 'wet' trades, in vocational schools. As a result of this study, off-the-job courses for bricklaying and plastering apprentices were organised by the Limerick VEC, and for plastering apprentices by the Cork VEC. In both cases the courses were financially supported by AnCO from levy/grant funds, and had the full cooperation of the local employer and trade union Joint Councils for the building industry.

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**The Review of Apprenticeship:**

In a document entitled AnCO Policy on Apprentice Education and Training dated 27 May, 1969, AnCO outlined its own role in the organisation and control of the apprenticeship system, and sought to indicate how this should integrate with the roles of industry (employers and trade unions), the Department of Education and the VECs. Responsibilities were defined and consultation procedures were set out, and AnCO policy on the training of apprentices in its own Training Centres was clearly stated. This document gave the impression that one of its functions was to allay any fears there might be that the interests of the other bodies involved in apprenticeship might be overlooked. The final paragraph of the document, however, was:

It is intended to review the overall position of apprenticeship training and in the light of this review AnCO's policy as indicated above may be changed.(56)

The Review of Apprenticeship was an agenda item for the meeting of the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training held on 23 October, 1969. At this meeting, Mr. Micheal O Flanagan, Chief Inspector, Department of Education and a member of the AnCO Council, reported on the proceedings of a recent European Conference on the Evolution of Technical and Vocational Education which he had attended, and at which apprenticeship was discussed. In his report, Mr. O Flanagan gave examples of the position in the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden and Great Britain. He also reported that the tendency in Europe was for pupils to remain longer in vocational schools, even up to eighteen years of age. If that pattern developed in Ireland, he said, it could well mean that the first, and possibly the second years of apprenticeship training, could be carried out in the appropriate manner in the vocational schools, as was the

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case in Sweden. This meeting decided to recommend to the Council of AnCO that a review of apprenticeship training should be undertaken by a select committee. The committee should be chaired by Mr. Gleeson, the Chairman of the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training, and should have two members from each side of industry and a secretary. The review should be carried out with the assistance of an executive, appointed to guide the Committee, who should be independent and have experience of industrial activity, preferably associated with training. However, 'the findings and recommendations should be those of the committee itself'. The terms of reference of the select committee should be:

- (a) to examine the present policy of AnCO in the training of apprentices
- (b) to evaluate the extent to which this policy is at present being implemented
- (c) to make recommendations as to the changes which it considers are needed in policy and implementation having regard to the changing circumstances of industry.(57)

**Select Committee on Apprenticeship Review:**

The response of the AnCO Council was to appoint the General Committee on Apprenticeship Training as the 'select committee', and to instruct that:

In discharging its task the Committee would seek the advice of the relevant statutory Industrial Training Committees, the educational authorities and other appropriate personnel.(58)

The Engineering Industry and Construction Industry Training Committees both set up sub-committees to review apprenticeship. They used the terms of reference of the Select Committee, and a reporting procedure, through their parent committees, to that Committee was agreed. The Printing and Paper Industry Training Committee set up a similiar sub-committee later.

As had originally been recommended, the Select Committee now appointed an executive, a research officer from the Institute of Public Administration, as a consultant to help it in its work, particularly in the area of providing information. An educational psychologist was also co-opted to the Committee to assist the Chairman, in planning the nature and scope of the enquiries needed, in assessing and preparing the information and in drafting the report. The research officer carried out a preliminary survey during which he met persons involved with the training of apprentices, and visited a number of firms, vocational schools and training centres. A progress report was submitted in June, 1970, highlighting twelve problem areas, among them: the involvement of too many bodies in apprenticeship; uneven training facilities; absence of standards at entry and exit; apprenticeship policy not specific to the different trades; teachers and instructors out of touch with industrial conditions and a 'distrust and even hostility between some staff members of AnCO and the VECs regarding the other organisation'.(59) By this stage, more detailed terms of reference had been prepared by the educational psychologist, and the research officer concluded that he should concentrate his survey on one trade, that of carpentry and joinery. The Select Committee, however, felt this approach to be too narrow. It decided, instead, to continue its review through the medium of the sub-committees of the Engineering, Construction and Printing and Paper Industrial Training Committees, which were then given the same Terms of Reference (60). This effectively ended the involvement of the Select



Committee in the review of apprenticeship and it ceased to function shortly afterwards without completing a report. Subsequently, its function in the review of apprenticeship was assumed by the Council of AnCO itself.

The Industrial Training Committees had a statutory role to assist and advise the Council in training matters affecting their industries and apprenticeship was a very sensitive area, particularly as far as the craft-based Committees were concerned. The nature of their representative structure meant that they were more in touch with issues on the ground and thus had a much broader area of consultation and involvement than the Select Committee. It was recognised, too, that any changes in the apprenticeship system would need their support and agreement. The Engineering Industry sub-committee completed its Report during 1972, and those of the Construction and Printing and Paper Industry sub-committees were in the final stages of completion at that stage. Evaluations had been carried out on the experimental programmes in off-the-job apprentice training in the AnCO/CIE Training Centre, in AnCO's own Centres and in VEC Colleges. The stage was now set to take the review of apprenticeship a step further. In October, 1972, an Apprenticeship Review Group of three persons was set up under the direction of Mr. Jack Agnew, formerly Chief Executive of An Cheard Chomhairle - the Apprenticeship Board - and a member of the AnCO Council since its inception. Mr. Agnew succeeded Mr. Brian McManus as Director of AnCO in August, 1970, the latter resigning to resume his career in the Civil Service. The brief of this Review Group was to prepare a document which would initiate a national discussion on a new apprenticeship system.

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**Summary:**

In the ten year period since the establishment, in 1962, of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Retraining and Resettlement in Relation to the European Social Fund, a number of major initiatives, with economic and social implications, had been taken in relation to the workforce. In the economic sphere, there had been a significant increase in the allocation of funding to the industrial training area. The first White Paper on Manpower Policy, published in 1965, and the Industrial Training Bill introduced in the following year, had presaged the establishment of an industrial training authority with wide-ranging powers, including the power to impose a levy on employers, and the setting up of industrial training centres. A new Department of Labour had been established, in 1966, with responsibility for the whole area of industrial manpower policy including training. By 1968, An Chomhairle Oiluna - AnCO - had been established under the Industrial Training Act and the narrowly based Apprenticeship Act of 1959 had been repealed. These developments would result in a more centrally controlled and co-ordinated approach to the requirements of the expanding labour market.

The setting up of the Industrial Training Centres, which had begun operations on industrial estates, had social as well as economic implications. To meet the needs of the new industries being introduced by the I.D.A., training and retraining in specific skills was being provided for unemployed adults, by qualified instructors, using A.V.T. methods. In a new departure training allowances and travel allowances were being paid to trainees, and accommodation subsidies were available to those who had to live away from home. A number of pilot schemes in the training of apprentices using A.V.T. methods were also underway. These were located in some of the AnCO Training Centres, in the AnCO/CIE Apprentice Training Centre and in some

vocational schools. By October, 1972, preparations for a major review of the apprenticeship system had begun. In the related area of education, a number of new institutions in the form of Regional Technical Colleges and National Institutes for Higher Education had been established, to provide for the skilled technological manpower needs of a rapidly developing economy.

Finally, in January 1972, Ireland became a member of the European Economic Community and, as a result of the initiatives described, was poised to take advantage of the provisions of the European Social Fund in the area of training and retraining. This funding was, eventually, to become a major influence on the approach to, and the development of, national training policy.

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PLATE 2



AN ENGINEERING WORKSHOPS IN AN AnCO TRAINING CENTRE

1975

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## Chapter Eleven

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW APPRENTICESHIP

1972 to 1976

#### 1. AnCO's Training Programmes

##### **The Training within Industry Programme:**

In a document, Training Policy of AnCO, issued in April, 1969, and outlining the policy to be followed for the next eighteen months, two main programmes were identified. The first of these, later to be called the Training Within Industry Programme, focussed on the encouragement of industry to carry out its own training, by the operation of a levy /grant system, while the second one, the Direct Training Programme, was designed around the development of AnCO's Training Centres, including its Instructor Training Centre. In the first programme, it was felt that it was important to avoid the problems that had developed in the United Kingdom where, for example, in the case of the Engineering Industry Training Board, the introduction of a fairly sizeable levy, - 2.5% of payroll:

was successful in creating a good deal of activity but the evidence suggests that much of it was wasteful and bureaucratic in the sense that training was and is being pursued for training's sake - in pursuit of grant - rather than for its proven contribution to industrial efficiency.(1)



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It was felt that AnCO could do nothing worse than 'to stimulate a large demand for training which when expressed cannot be satisfied'. A better approach, it was considered, and one similar to that which had been adopted in Northern Ireland, would be based on a process of the identification of the training needs of industry and of the firms within it, and the demonstration, through pilot schemes, of how these needs could be met in a practical way. These schemes would be used to 'sell' good training practices to management, which would then be encouraged to undertake appropriate in-firm training with the appointment of training officers, or executives, and instructors, who would develop and implement individual training plans. An AnCO priority, in the early stages, was to assist firms to find and train such people, using its Instructor Training Centre and the Irish Management Institute to provide instructors and training managers. Both management and the trades unions would have to be convinced of the value of training, as a tool of industrial efficiency which would enhance profits, and as being beneficial to workers. It would be important, as well, to allay any fears the latter might have about the possible effects of training on employment and on the labour market. Particular attention would be paid to small firms, the proportion of which, in the Irish economy, was very high. It was decided that the implementation of a levy/grant scheme would not be rushed and that, initially, considerable effort would be put into researching the market, promoting the value of training, developing modern training resources and methods and equipping its own specialist staff to provide a service to industry. It was a market orientated approach designed to win support, eventually, for the introduction of a system of levy/grant schemes. The essential philosophy of the Training Within Industry Programme was that industry would be equipped to provide for its own training needs, which would be funded through levy/grant schemes. AnCO's role would be one of promotion, encouragement, advice and assistance. In the area of

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apprenticeship, for which AnCO had a statutory responsibility, its role, as will be seen, was to become more definitive and participative, especially in relation to the training of first year apprentices.

#### **Direct Training Programme:**

On the other hand, the Direct Training Programme was one, as the policy document put it, 'where most can be done without the complications of the levy/grant mechanism'(2) and where AnCO would itself provide training. The programme of work envisaged the extension of the Training Centre network with the development, therein, of modern training techniques, a realistic industrial atmosphere, and expertise in the selection, placement and follow-up of trainees. It involved the training of adults, the long-term unemployed and agricultural workers leaving the land, and pilot schemes in the off-the-job training of apprentices. It was intended to tackle the problems which were anticipated in industry, both with employers and trade unions, because the training of adults in the skills which would be demanded by the policy of new and expanding industrial development and the manpower programme required to support it, might conflict with the traditional apprenticeship concept. The Instructor Training Centre would be developed to the stage where courses would be run continuously, to provide instructors both for industry and for new Training Centres. In relation to apprenticeship, the Direct Training Programme provided for:

An evaluation of the present apprenticeship training scheme combined with a study of the ways in which it might best be interpreted in its present or in a different form with the operation of the Industrial Training Act.(3)

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By early 1973, these programmes had progressed to the stage where, in the case of Training Within Industry, six industrial sectors - Textiles; Clothing and Footwear; Food, Drink and Tobacco; Construction; Engineering and Printing and Paper Products - had been designated and had levy/grant schemes in operation, with levies which ranged from 1% to 1.25% of total payroll, considerably lower than those in the United Kingdom. A seventh sector, Chemical and Allied Products, was in the process of designation. The total number of training officers who had been appointed by Irish firms was 622, while AnCO had trained 1,260 instructors for industry. In 1972/73, AnCO Training Advisory staff had paid a total of 12,507 visits to 8,988 firms to promote training, and in-depth training projects were carried out in 100 firms.(4) In the case of the levies, 10% was retained by AnCO as a contribution towards the costs of providing a Training Advisory Service, whereas approximately 90% of the levy paid by individual firms was returned to them, in the form of grants. To qualify for these, firms were required to appoint qualified training staff, identify their own training needs and prepare and implement programmes to meet those needs. Surplus levies, in respect of firms which had not qualified for full grants, were used for special projects for the benefit of the industry as a whole. Difficulties arose, in some instances, with the collection of the levy, particularly in the Construction Industry, because of its traditional diverse and complex nature, but, on the whole, 'the levy/grant system worked satisfactorily'. However, the following comment, in the 1973 Annual Report, indicates that some of the problems which had become apparent in schemes in the United Kingdom had also surfaced here:

but the question arises - is the quantity of additional training being matched by a marked improvement in the quality and effectiveness of training? It does appear at this early stage, that there are quite a number of firms

whose motivation is determined more by the amount of levy they recover than by their commitment to improved training.(5)

In the case of the Direct Training Programme, six Industrial Training Centres were now in operation - in Shannon, Waterford, Galway, Dublin, Cork and at Gweedore in the Donegal Gaeltacht (in co-operation with Gaeltarra Eireann), and two new Centres were planned, for Sligo and Limerick. In the four years to March 1973, 2,524 adults and 820 apprentices had been trained in AnCO Training Centres, with all of the apprentices and 85% of the adults being placed in employment. The long-term plan was to provide 4,000 training places, with an annual throughput, based on a mix of twelve week courses for adults and one year courses for apprentices, of 10,000 by 1978.

**European Social Fund Subvention:**

Because of Ireland's accession to the EEC, grant-aid from the European Social Fund had become available and AnCO had submitted a claim for £1.6 M. for the year 1973 to help finance the expansion of its training facilities. This access to funding from the EEC was to become a very significant factor in the development and expansion of modern industrial training facilities in Ireland and programmes tended to be driven by the availability of such funding. An application had also been made to the World Bank for capital for the building and equipping of new Training Centres. The use of spare training capacity in vocational schools (during summer holidays) for Introduction to Industry courses, and facilities within industry to augment and expand the range of AnCO's own capacity, were also under examination. It was hoped to overcome shortages of technicians, highlighted as a result of the identification of training needs

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approach in industry, by the development of suitable courses in Regional Colleges and Colleges of Technology. The provision of commercial courses for married women wishing to return to the workforce was also being investigated at this stage. The fact that all of this activity would qualify for subvention from the ESF provided a strong stimulus to increase the numbers undergoing training. In the case of the Introduction to Industry courses, for example, 58 centres in the vocational educational sector provided such training in July 1973.(6) There was, however, considerable resentment in the educational sector that, while ESF funding was available to AnCO for training activities, and particularly for the equipping of Training Centres, similar funding was not available at that stage, under the existing Rules of the European Social Fund, for vocational education.

#### **Apprentices:**

Apprenticeship, at this stage, straddled the Training Within Industry and the Direct Training Programmes and was referred to as Training for Skill. On the one hand, the apprenticeship system put in place by An Cheard Chomhairle continued, with apprentices being recruited by employers, and undergoing practical training on-the-job in industry, and theoretical and some practical training on day or block release courses in vocational schools and colleges. This education and training formed part of the training plans of firms in designated industries, and qualified for grants from the various levy/grant schemes, and thus benefited from this and from the fact that many firms, in order to qualify for grants, had by now appointed training managers and instructors, and were being visited on a regular basis by AnCO training advisory staff. These assisted in the development of training plans in individual firms, and, accordingly, promoted apprenticeship in

them. In addition, many of the levy/grant schemes, particularly those drawn up by the craft-based Industrial Training Committees, especially Construction and Engineering (which included Motor), were designed to be very supportive of apprenticeship. The Printing and Paper Products Committee, however, although very much craft orientated, considered that apprenticeship in its industry was so well organised and established that it did not need such incentives, and its grants were directed towards technician, supervisory and management training.

On the other hand under the Direct Training Programme, in its own Training Centres, in the AnCO/CIE Training Centre, and with the special apprentice courses in plastering and bricklaying operated in conjunction with the Cork and Limerick VECs, experiments were taking place in full time off-the-job training of first year apprentices, supplemented with release courses to vocational schools and colleges. These experiments included intensive practical and industry-relevant training, using the most up-to-date equipment and was given by trained and experienced instructors under simulated industrial conditions and disciplines. In addition, selection procedures were based on aptitude testing, as well as interviews and educational qualifications. Employers, with whom apprentices had been placed following their off-the-job training, were visited and asked for their views on these new methods. By 1973, AnCO had almost four years experience of this approach, and had trained up to 1,000 first-year apprentices in this way. Reports from employers and trade unions were very good, (although there were some reservations with regard to apprentice attitudes under real working conditions), and performance at the Junior Trade examinations at the end of the first year training period was considered excellent. At this stage AnCO was convinced that the way to an improved apprenticeship system lay along this path.

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**An Adult Apprentice Scheme:**

An interesting development at this time was the initiation of a pilot Adult Apprenticeship scheme, in conjunction with the establishment of the Cork Training Centre. It will be recalled that the admission of adults to apprenticeship was an issue which the Minister had referred to, in the Dail debates, as being a desirable feature of a new Industrial Training Bill, and which was expected to be strongly resisted by trade union interests. Training Centres began to be seen as an important facility to have in a locality and there was considerable political and community pressure on AnCO to provide them. Based on the experience gained from the operation of existing Centres, they could be got off the ground very quickly. There was very little bureaucratic interference, as the sooner they were operational, the sooner ESF funding would become available. A manager would be appointed, a suitable temporary building obtained, and courses could begin as soon as instructors were appointed. For instance, in the case of the Dublin Training Centre at Ballyfermot (which was, in fact, purpose built), although the building was not fully completed, the first trainees commenced courses less than a year after the building contractors had moved onto the site. An interesting fact, also, in relation to this Centre, was that equipment such as welding booths, carpenters' work benches and the tables for the canteen were made, as work projects, by the apprentices in the Shannon, Waterford and Galway Training Centres. As was to be expected, there was considerable pressure to establish a Training Centre in Cork. Following a meeting between the Director of AnCO, Mr. Jack Agnew, and the Cork Council of Trades Unions, there was a press announcement to the effect that Cork was to get a Training Centre and that the Cork unions had agreed to the setting up of an adult engineering apprenticeship course. A Centre manager was appointed, the old Murrough Woollen Mills premises at Douglas were acquired and a

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Training Centre, with an initial capacity of 150 places for apprentices, adult apprentices and existing craftsmen (for updating of skills) was opened in July, 1972, and the adult apprenticeship course commenced in December of that year.(8) The arrangement continued, under a formal agreement involving AnCO, employers and trade unions, for a number of years, and helped to alleviate skill shortages in the Cork region until increased normal apprenticeship intake eliminated the need for it on economic grounds. It was regrettable, however, that its importance as a social experiment was not fully appreciated and exploited at the time.

#### **Summary of the Apprenticeship Position:**

The apprenticeship position at the 31st. March 1973, just prior to the publication of the Discussion Document, can be summarised as follows: there were in all 14,455 registered apprentices, in the seven trade groups of Furniture, Printing, Electrical, Motor, Engineering, Construction and Dental Craftsman, involving some 54 occupations, and there were 1,834 first-year apprentices on the Register. These figures represented an increase of 2611, or 22% in total registrations and a decrease of 37, or 2% in first year registrations at the establishment of AnCO in 1967. (It should be pointed out, however, that, in March 1972, the first year figure was 2,200, an increase of 329, or 18%, - the fall in intake in 1973 being attributable to the first oil crisis). Total attendances at educational release courses was 9,091, an increase of 2,437, or 37% on the 1967 figure. Block release had gone up from 2,035 to 4,050 (100%), primarily due to initiatives taken by An Cheard Chomhairle, while day release had increased from 4,619 to 5,041 (9%). In 1973, of the 1,834 registered first-year apprentices, 830 were being trained off-the-job, 330 in AnCO Centres and an estimated 500 in centres such as the Army



Apprentice Schools in the Air Corps at Baldonnel and at Naas, and in the ESB and CIE Training Centres.(7)

As early as its Annual Report for the period April 1971 to March 1972, AnCO had been signalling the likely format of a revised apprenticeship system. Its predictions tended to be based largely on the experience gained from the pilot off-the-job apprentice courses and on the reports of the three sub-committees of the Engineering, Construction and Printing Industrial Training Committees. While that of the Printing sub-committee tended to recommend adherence to the traditional system, those of the Engineering and Construction sub-committees recommended a more radical and liberal approach, although retaining some of the basic essentials of traditional apprenticeship. It was apparent, however, that management envisaged a fairly radical change from the system put in place by An Cheard Chomhairle, particularly in relation to the work of training advisers and the controls to be applied. A circular from management to training advisers dated 26 April, 1972, stated:

Both the Engineering and the Construction Sub-Committees on Apprenticeship have recommended to their parent Committees that apprentice training be concentrated into the early years of apprenticeship and that this training be given in an off-the-job situation. If this recommendation is finally accepted by the Council of AnCO it follows that there will be no apprentices to be visited, that there will be no consent to employ required, that there will be no assessment of training facilities etc. In other words much of the role of the field supervisor in apprenticeship matters will have disappeared.(9)

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This circular, (which was intended to alert training advisers to the likely changes in their future operational role and the need to develop themselves for this), also envisaged a review of compulsory levy/grant schemes as soon as industry was equipped to undertake its own training. It was expected that training advisers might have to act as consultants, rather than as inspectors of training and enforcers of legislation. While there was some move towards this 'vision of the future' in relation to levy/grant schemes and the role of the training advisory service, the concept of an unpoliced apprenticeship system was to prove unacceptable to trade union representatives such as Mr. John Mulhall of the Painters and Decorators trade union. He was now an ICTU representative on the AnCO Council, with first hand experience of the problems created by such an approach in the operation of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act. The future of apprenticeship was to be the development of a professional approach to training within a modified form of the traditional system.

## **2. The Apprenticeship Discussion Document**

### **A Significant New Departure:**

AnCO was now about to embark on a major review of apprenticeship which would aim to effect radical changes in the traditional format. The context in which this review would take place was one of long-established vested interests and entrenched positions with regard to the factors which controlled the apprenticeship system, perceptions and attitudes hallowed by ancient tradition and structures which had not been significantly altered since the first industrial revolution. Apart from the inherent resistance to change present in all systems, there were genuine fears regarding the effects of

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disturbing the existing balance of power and of relationships between the many interest groups involved in apprenticeship. To achieve the radical changes desired AnCO adopted an approach which was, in itself, radical at the time. It involved a determination to initiate a national debate on the apprenticeship system by providing a basis for discussion, by methodically involving all the interest groups country-wide and by setting out to sell and promote its proposals in a professional manner, using public relations support. The overall aim was, through this process to arrive at something approaching a national consensus on what should be done.

The Discussion Document, Apprenticeship - A New Approach was launched at a press conference in May, 1973, and appears to have been the first discussion document of its kind published in Ireland. In a carefully phrased foreword, Mr. Paul Quigley, who had replaced Mr. Michael Killeen as Chairman of AnCO in February, 1971, wrote:

This document has been prepared by the staff of AnCO. It contains proposals for discussion, NOT decisions.

The Council of AnCO, which is representative of employer, trade union and educational interests, hopes that the document will be studied widely and in depth, so that views may be obtained on the proposals of the staff and that full discussions can take place before the Council comes to decisions. (10)

The phrasing of the Foreword sought to distance the Council, somewhat, from the proposals in the Document and to indicate that, while they were anxious that they should be discussed, they were not Council proposals and had not been approved by them except as a basis for discussion. Radical changes in apprenticeship, in particular the proposal to reduce the

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apprenticeship period from five years to three, would have been very difficult for the craft union representatives on the AnCO Council to subscribe to.

**Philosophy:**

The philosophy behind the initiation of a national discussion was, that for a revised apprenticeship to be successful, it had to have the support of employers, trade unions, educationalists and the general public, including workers at shop floor level and parents. It was considered that, unless a number of radical changes were made and implemented, any new system would tend, in time, to revert again to traditional methods. It was recognised that there were emotive issues, particularly on the trade union side, such as the period of apprenticeship, control of intake and the hereditary system of recruitment. These were not really important from a purely training point of view, but it had to be recognised they were real issues, especially at shop floor level, which could not be ignored. The existing system was itself an inherited one, and, if it had not existed in 1973, it is unlikely that such a method of training skilled workers would have been developed at that stage. Traditional apprenticeship, on the other hand, did provide, albeit often in an unsystematic and inefficient way, a mix of skill acquisition, technical education and work experience which had produced, and could produce, excellent craftsmen under certain conditions. It was, in fact, a way of doing things rather than a system. What was needed was a better way which was more systematic and which would introduce modern training methods, eliminate out-of-date practices and lead to better all round standards. The Discussion Document put it this way:

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Basis of Reform Proposals. However, the most realistic approach to those trades that are catered for under the present statutory apprenticeship system is to build on existing good tradition. In this document proposals are put forward which would modify the existing apprenticeship system to bring it into line with modern requirements and to make it more readily responsive to changing circumstances.(11)

What was considered to be practical, in the circumstances of the time, was an evolutionary approach which would be confined to the statutory trades currently designated, and 'it was not proposed that the existing statutory apprenticeship system should be extended to other occupations ....'(12) Therefore, although it was recognised that there were newer skilled occupations for which training was needed, as these had not 'inherited' an apprenticeship system it was not intended to propose one for them now. It was felt that training could be provided more effectively for these in other ways. In a MBA thesis, Traditional Apprenticeship and a Skilled Workforce, Mr. P.J.O'Connor, then Manager, Training Advisory Services, AnCO, summarised the overall position as follows :

the need for a skilled work force remains and must be met whilst acknowledging the existence of the traditional apprenticeship system and the motivations and strengths of its supporters and opponents. Therefore the mechanism to supply the skilled workers must, as has developed elsewhere, rationalise those parts of the system which can make a contribution and supplement them with other arrangements which recognise the economic and social realities with which we are faced.(13)

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Among the recommendations made in this thesis was that 'The word "apprentice" and the term "apprenticeship" should be abolished and the words craft-trainee substituted.'(14)

### **General Strategy:**

The drafting of the Discussion Document was undertaken by the Apprenticeship Review Group but was closely monitored by the Director-General, Mr. Jack Agnew. The overall strategy was, initially, to assume a 'green field' situation and to decide, in that context, how a new system should be organised, identifying those elements which were essential to it, and what changes in the existing system were needed. The fact that it was not a 'green field' situation was then addressed, and the various interest groups and their probable reactions considered. The elements deemed to be essential to the new system would be adhered to in subsequent discussions, and, if any concessions were to be made, these would relate to those elements considered not to be essential. The document was drafted on this basis, with a forward position being taken in certain areas, for example, in relation to the period of apprenticeship. In this case, although it was recognised that any reduction in the existing period of five years would be generally perceived to be an important advance, the actual period was not considered an essential element - the quality of the training, rather than the period over which it was delivered - being the important consideration. It would, however, be of particular relevance from the trade union standpoint, as the unions would see any such reduction as increasing the number of craftsmen, thereby affecting the supply and demand position and, consequently, the wages of their members. Politically sensitive issues were addressed, such as apprenticeships for women and for adults. Proposals that would tend to be welcomed, particularly by the craft union

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members, such as a 'ladder to higher levels' for apprentices, and up-dating of skills courses for existing craftsmen, were included as intrinsically desirable and in the interest of overall balance within the proposed scheme.

In its Introduction, the Discussion Document gave a brief background of traditional apprenticeship, its development in Ireland under the 1931 and the 1959 Apprenticeship Acts, the general defects in the system as it had developed here to date and the need for changes and for flexibility to meet modern requirements. It dealt with the establishment of AnCO and detailed the background to the review now being initiated, including references to the reports of the three Industrial Training Committees and the experimental apprenticeship courses. In relation to defects, it was considered that the present system was, to a great extent, out of date. Practical training on the job was often inadequate and:

The difficulty of organising and controlling effective on-the-job training in the modern workplace with its emphasis on production was becoming increasingly obvious.(15)

According to the Document, theoretical training was remote from practical requirements and the recruitment of apprentices took little account of their aptitudes for the job, or for the likely future needs for skilled workers. There were no set standards and no system of testing or certification.

**Overall Aims:**

The proposals as set out in the Discussion Document aimed at ensuring in a revised apprenticeship system:

a systematic approach to recruitment and training

training relevant to the job to be performed

integration of the practical skills and knowledge content of training

a system of testing and certification to ensure that agreed standards were reached

a system flexible enough to cater for the changes likely to occur in techniques, materials and methods of production

the intake of apprentices to take account of likely future requirements of skilled men, to avoid both shortages and oversupply.(16)

The overall objective was to replace the existing apprenticeship formats, which in many instances appeared to be haphazard and unplanned, by a national system which would be more structured and professional in its approach to training.

In all, eighteen major proposals were made which were to form the basis for a comprehensive national debate on apprenticeship (see Summary of Proposals, Section 18, Discussion Document). Of these, two related to financial considerations, including the allocation of costs as between the State and employers, (ESF funding had yet to become available for apprenticeship), and the estimated additional capital and operating costs of the proposals to the Exchequer, and one established a time frame for a change-over to the new system. The other sixteen proposed far reaching and, in some cases, radical changes in traditional apprenticeship. In respect of each proposal, a short section discussed the underlying rationale, stating the defects in the current system and outlining how these would be overcome should the proposal be adopted. As it was intended that the



Document should be widely read, the arguments were simply stated and the proposals were highlighted in the text.

**Off-the-Job Training and Location of Training Facilities:**

The most radical proposal made in the Discussion Document was:

that all apprentices should undergo an initial period of full time off-the-job training in their first year.(17)

This would take place in properly equipped and staffed industrial training centres. In these centres, which could be in vocational schools, in industry or in AnCO Training Centres, industrial conditions and disciplines would apply and the emphasis would be on training and not on production. Apprentices would follow a planned training syllabus, with an educational component, which would include testing procedures. In such a controlled training environment, it would be possible to eliminate the defects apparent in training on-the-job, such as the emphasis on production, limited range of work and equipment, particularly in small firms, and the different attitudes of many employers and craftsmen to the training of apprentices. In general it was felt that, while experience on-the-job was an essential part of any apprenticeship, no real training in the modern sense was taking place on-the-job and, therefore, there was no control of what the apprentice was taught, or whether it was correct or not. Furthermore, it was impossible for an outside organisation to bring about any great improvement in what was happening, through infrequent visits by supervisory staff. The ideal would be to have training centres within industrial concerns, as in Germany, but it was recognised that, in the Irish context, the scale of industry was such as to preclude this approach except in the case of one or two large semi-State bodies, such as CIE and the ESB, and

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the Defence Forces, although the possibility of group training centres could be considered. In relation to the provision of off-the-job facilities, one of the proposals was, that the vocational education system might be developed to provide industrial type training for apprentices, and it was stated:

Provided that suitable arrangements could be agreed it is considered that the bulk of apprentices could, with advantage, be trained in the Vocational Education system.(18)

The 'suitable arrangements' envisaged the introduction of industrial conditions, disciplines and working hours, a feature of off-the-job training which employers considered essential, to emphasise the fact that the apprentice was now a young worker rather than a student. As part of the firm's workforce, they were paid a wage during apprenticeship, - a percentage of the full craft rate which increased with the year of apprenticeship - and contributed to the output of the company. It made economic sense, therefore, that the bulk of the training should take place in the first year, thus allowing the apprentice to be more productive in his employment in subsequent years. Although additional training modules, some of which might have to be mandatory but which, in general, would be optional, were proposed for the second and third years of apprenticeship, this would be more costly from the employers point of view. Not only would the wage costs be higher but there would also be a loss of revenue from a member of the workforce.

#### **Period of Apprenticeship:**

Even though it was envisaged that the bulk of the apprentice's training would take place in a Training Centre in the first

year, it was considered that a young person, starting work at about sixteen years, would require time to mature, to gain work experience and to build up speed and physical stamina, before becoming fully qualified. To assess progress during this time, it was proposed that the apprentice would maintain a work log-book, to record details of experience, jobs done and tests undertaken while at work. While the Printing Apprenticeship Review sub-Committee had made no recommendation on the apprenticeship period, the Engineering and Construction reports had both proposed four years.(19) On the basis that, in the existing system, very little training took place in the first year and that, in the fifth year the apprentices were mainly employed doing craftsman's work, it was proposed:

... that the period should not normally be longer than three years.(20)

As an additional support for this proposal, reference was made to EEC membership and to its Common Policy for Vocational Training (an extract of which was included at Annex 3) and the likelihood that a common European three year apprenticeship, as in Germany and France, would eventually emerge.

#### **Standard National Apprenticeship Curricula:**

It was felt that essential changes had to be made in the provision of curricula. The introduction of off-the-job training in Training Centres would, in any case, create the need for syllabi, work programmes, lesson plans and practical exercise work sheets, and some of these had been provided for the experimental apprentice courses by the AnCO Curriculum

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Development Unit. The existing Rules to cover training on-the-job had been drawn up by An Cheard Chomhairle, while the syllabi for the educational release courses, which prepared apprentices for the Junior and Senior Trade examinations, had been prepared by the Department of Education. The content of these and, particularly, their effective integration left a lot to be desired. Commenting on this the Document stated:

... these rules and syllabi are based more on a conceived view of what the skill and knowledge of a craft should be rather than what is actually required today.(21)

In regard to trade theory, it was stated that it was 'often difficult to establish a meaningful relationship between what was being taught in the schools and the practical work which is being done on-the-job'.(22) This lack of integration was creating difficulties for AnCO in its efforts to get apprentices to attend courses, and employers to release them. The issue of the general education of apprentices was also raised and it was maintained that what was provided during apprenticeship should relate to their new role, that of young workers, and should not be seen as a means of correcting deficiencies in general education. It was suggested that it should cover such topics as verbal and written reports, work related mathematics, safety and hygiene and industrial civics subjects. This whole area of education for apprentices, as distinct from their training, was to generate considerable debate. The emerging issue of continuing education during working life was also referred to and it was felt that the question of general education for apprentices was only part of a wider debate, affecting all workers and not just apprentices.(23) The proposal in relation to syllabi was:

... training syllabi should reflect accurately the actual skill and knowledge requirements of the particular job.

These requirements would be determined by analyses undertaken by AnCO of actual jobs. .... Comprehensive training syllabi, based on the analyses, would be drafted by AnCO specialist staff. .... These would form the standard training programmes for each craft and would have to be strictly adhered to wherever training is given.(24)

The syllabi, which would include test procedures, would be discussed in detail with all the interests concerned and would be subject to approval by the appropriate Industrial Training Committee.

**Testing and Certification:**

Ireland's accession to the EEC, with the prospect of the free movement of workers, the right of establishment in the case of self-employed persons and the harmonisation and mutual recognition of qualifications, gave an added impetus to the move for a national system of testing and certification for craftsmen. The Department of Education's Junior and Senior Trade examinations were available, and set suitable standards both in theoretical knowledge and practical work. Apprentices were prepared for these examinations on educational release courses, but they were not compulsory, and many apprentices did not take any examinations. The real difficulty was the attitude of the craft unions which recognised craftsman status once an apprentice had 'served his time'. (The fact that AnCO also issued a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship did not help the situation). The Discussion Document put it this way:

Completion of the apprenticeship period is all that is required for recognition of skilled status and membership

of the appropriate union is deemed the hallmark of competency.(25)

Phased testing, which allowed faults to be corrected at the end of each phase, combined with continuous assessment, was deemed more appropriate for apprentices, particularly in an off-the-job situation, than a single terminal test. It was considered important, also, to involve both employers and trade unions, through local assessment boards, in the testing and certification process. The proposal was:

... to set standards and to control the issue of national certificates of competency in the case of skilled occupations. Under the Industrial Training Act, 1967, AnCO has the authority to do this.(26)

The intention was that AnCO would lay down national guidelines setting out procedures and standards, and would award Certificates of Competency on the recommendation of the local boards. The issue of the testing and certification of apprentices, which had been provided for in the 1931 and 1959 Apprenticeship Acts, was to be addressed again in 1973.

#### **Educational Entry Qualifications:**

Educational qualifications and entry to apprenticeship had been an issue since the Report of the Commission on Technical Education in 1927. The difficulties identified, at that stage, included the fact that young persons were leaving school early, in some cases as early as ten and a half years, to take up employment, that many could not read or write and that the curriculum in primary schools tended to create a dislike for industrial work. It was expected that the School Attendance Act, combined with the Primary Leaving Certificate, the

restoration of drawing as a compulsory subject at primary level and the proposed technical continuation courses, (later to lead to the Group Certificate), would solve many of the problems highlighted by the Commission. Both the 1931 and the 1959 Acts provided for the making of rules relating to apprentice educational entry qualifications. Under the 1931 Act, in which the making of such rules was discretionary, only one or two Committees made them and these specified just attendance at various educational courses. On the other hand, the continuation course leading to the award of the Group Certificate was generally considered to be the most suitable preparation for apprenticeship. In the case of the 1959 Act, the making of educational entry rules was mandatory on An Cheard Chomhairle, following consultation with the Apprenticeship Committees and the Department of Education. Such Rules were, therefore, made in respect of the seven trade groups designated under the Act. These Rules, which differed with each trade group, specified particular grades in specific subjects at Group or Intermediate Certificate level as statutory minimum requirements for employers. The subjects were broadly related to the trade and were aimed at ensuring a successful understanding of the subjects to be followed later, on educational release courses. In respect of all these Rules, however, provision was made for An Chomhairle to grant exemptions to employers where suitably qualified candidates were not available. Certain trades were more popular than others, and, for them, there was no shortage of suitably qualified candidates. In general, an average of 17% of apprentices were granted exemptions, but in some of the 'wet' trades the figure was as high as 72% and, if educational qualifications were insisted on in all cases, the result would be a serious shortage of skilled men in some trades. In addition, it was considered unfair that any young person with the necessary motivation and aptitudes should be automatically (and statutorily) excluded from applying for an apprenticeship

because of failure in an examination, especially when failure at this level did not preclude further advancement in the educational sector. The Document, therefore, proposed:

that a young person who has completed a Junior Cycle course at Post Primary level, i.e. either the Group or Intermediate Certificate course, should be considered educationally qualified to commence training for a craft. .... However the educational background would need to be supported by aptitude testing.(27)

Employers were, of course, free to specify for their apprenticeships educational qualifications above the statutory minimum, if they so wished. It was hoped, also, that a simplification of the educational requirements would solve the problem which compelled employers to delay apprentice recruitment until examination results became available, often resulting in apprentices not being in employment when work was at its peak.

#### **Manpower Information Unit:**

The shortage of skilled workers was another problem area which the Discussion Document attempted to address. Shortages had become critical in certain skills in some locations due, in part, to the length of apprenticeships, the lack of flexibility in the system to cater for sudden increases in demand, the ratio factor of apprentices to skilled men and the success of the IDA in attracting new industries to Ireland in response to the Government's policy of industrialisation. Some progress had been made with the recruitment of AnCO-sponsored apprentices for the pilot courses in the Training Centres and almost 800 additional, well trained, apprentices had been introduced into the system. It was considered that more formal and planned



arrangements, which would have the support of the craft unions, were needed, while at the same time allaying any fears the unions might have that the 'trades would be flooded'. It was proposed, therefore:

... to establish a manpower information unit within AnCO to collect, collate, assess and make available information on manpower requirements so that its training policies, priorities and activities can more accurately reflect national needs. .... AnCO would then, in consultation with its representative Industrial Training Committees, establish intake quotas for all crafts to ensure, as far as possible, that neither shortages nor oversupply would occur.(28)

Employers would be expected to recruit sufficient apprentices to meet their own replacement and growth needs, while AnCO would recruit apprentices to meet the requirements of new industries. Any shortfall in employer recruitment, however, would be made up by AnCO and paid for from levy/grant funds.

**Craft Training for Adults:**

In the Dail Debate on the Industrial Training Bill, special reference was made by the Minister to the need to provide a 'second chance' opportunity for adults, who had missed out on getting apprenticeships when leaving school, to acquire craft status. There was also the problem that industrial progress could make some trades obsolete, creating a need to train the tradesmen concerned in new skills. Localised shortages of skilled workers could arise, for example, in areas with no previous industrial tradition, and to which existing skilled workers were not prepared to move. Such shortages could only be met by training adults rapidly to skilled level, as the

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normal apprenticeship, which took five years to complete, was too inflexible to meet such situations. As has already been seen, some progress had been made with the introduction of the Adult Apprenticeship Pilot Scheme in Cork, and details of this were given in Annex 4 of the Document. There was a need now to extend this experiment to other areas and it was proposed that AnCO should :

... enter into discussions with trade union, employer and other interests for an arrangement under which in each skilled trade an agreed number of adults, preferably with related work experience, would receive special training to enable them acquire a Certificate of Competency.(29)

#### **Training Modules for Skilled Men:**

It was recognised that many existing craftsmen, possibly because of deficiencies in their own apprenticeships, or because of technological and other developments, would benefit from formal training in AnCO Training Centres, to update their own skills and knowledge or to develop new skills and techniques. It was considered that:

The expansion of training facilities in industrial-type training centres to cater for off-the-job training for apprentices would make it possible, also, to provide for a greatly increased number of short intensive training modules for existing craftsmen.(30)

It was intended that employers would release their craftsmen on full pay for such courses, but, in certain cases, AnCO would provide financial support to craftsmen who, of their own accord, attended such courses. This provision, together with a proposal that AnCO would consider similiar financial support

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for a 'ladder to higher levels' for apprentices, by which they could proceed to technician and technological level, was expected to prove attractive at shop floor level.

**Skilled Training for Women and Girls:**

In relation to skilled training for women and girls, while it was pointed out that there was no statutory bar on girls becoming apprentices, the situation at the time was that girls did not generally seek apprenticeships. Some unions were opposed to girls becoming apprentices to the skilled trades, and many employers felt that there were insurmountable practical difficulties in employing them. Parents, too, had reservations and some would have preferred that apprenticeships should go to their sons while their daughters would take up office jobs. In any case it was stated that AnCO :

propose to discuss with the employer organisations and the trade unions concerned how any such discrimination that may exist could be removed in respect of the few girls likely to be interested.(31)

**Non-Statutory Apprenticeship Trades:**

The need for training for skilled occupations other than those with statutory apprenticeships, referred to as the non-designated trades, was recognised and AnCO undertook to provide suitable training schemes for these, but outside the ambit of a revised apprenticeship system.

**Financial Considerations:**

It was proposed that the cost of implementing the system

outlined in the Document should be met jointly by the State and by Industry. Employers would be expected to bear the wage costs of apprentices recruited to meet their own current and projected needs, while the State would be responsible for the wage costs of apprentices recruited to meet the needs of new industries and for all other capital and operating costs. It was estimated that the additional capital costs of providing and equipping training places would be around £3m. and that the additional operating costs should not exceed £1m. per year, at current prices.(32)

**Time Frame:**

It was recognised that only the broad principles in a major reform of the apprenticeship system had been dealt with, and that there would have to be detailed discussions with the interests concerned in the application of these principles to individual trades. Stating that the proposals were both reasonable and workable, the Document concluded:

It is considered that a reform of the apprenticeship system on the lines proposed is a matter of urgency from a national viewpoint and that every effort should be made to transfer completely to the new system within a period of three years from 1st. January, 1974.(33)

### **3. The Discussion**

**General:**

The Discussion Document and a short brochure, Apprenticeship - Learning the Job - A Better Way, were published on the 1st. May, 1973. It was hoped that the views expressed and the

submissions received, as a result of the discussions generated, would assist the Council of AnCO to formulate guidelines for a new apprenticeship system which would have broad general support. Members of all of the Industrial Training Committees, as well as those of the three Apprenticeship sub-committees, were given a briefing some days before the press release. The Publicity Department of AnCO made an initial distribution of about 4,500 copies of the document and brochure to Government Ministers, Oireachtas members, Government Departments, State Sponsored Bodies, Trade Unions, Employer Organisations, Trades Councils, Trade Associations, Chambers of Commerce, the IVEA, CEOs, Teachers Associations, Vocational School Principals, members of the Institute of Training Managers and to all firms employing five apprentices or more. Each registered apprentice was sent a copy of the short brochure. A further 9,500 copies of the document and 30,000 copies of the brochure were distributed, subsequently, at meetings or were forwarded to interested parties.

**Public Meetings and Written Submissions:**

Public meetings to explain the proposals were held in Waterford, Cork, Carlow, Limerick, Galway, Dundalk, Sligo, Athlone, Letterkenny and Dublin and a further twenty-six meetings took place at the request of other interested groups. A full meeting of the AnCO/VEC Consultative Committee was devoted to a discussion of the proposals. Over 800 letters inviting submissions were sent out and the closing date for the receipt of these was extended from 31 July, to 31 October, 1973, because of many requests for more time to consider the proposals. In spite of this extension, quite a number of submissions were received after that date, the last coming on

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23 April, 1974. In all, 132 written submissions were received, broken down as follows:

Government Departments.	10.	State Sponsored Bodies.	18.
Employer Organisations.	12.	Trade Unions.	25.
Educationalists.	19.	Employers.	14.
Miscellaneous.	24.	AnCO Staff.	10.

Seminars to discuss the AnCO proposals were organised by ICTU and by the Union of Students of Ireland. Both were well attended (though not by apprentices) and AnCO staff made presentations explaining the proposals. In all, 103 meetings were held with those who had made submissions, to clarify positions on both sides, although two trade unions declined to attend to discuss their submissions. The Teachers Union of Ireland held its own press conference to publicise its views on the proposals.

As a result, a wide ranging and interesting discussion on apprenticeship was initiated which continued for more than a year. Editorial comment in the national daily and evening newspapers was favourable. An editorial in The Education Times, 21st. June, 1973, under the heading 'Jobs for the Boys' referred to:

... a fairly predictable polarisation of views, .... at present AnCO has an edge on the situation because of an extremely coherent and well-produced document. It has taken the initiative which the educationalists should have taken themselves if they regard the plight of the apprentice so seriously.

A number of articles on apprenticeship appeared in the press and gave rise to some correspondence, and there was also television and radio coverage. There was overseas interest as well, and British training journals commented favourably on the approach adopted, as did the Times Educational Supplement of London. Requests for copies of the document were received from English Technical Institutes and Training Boards, from the International Labour Organisation and from Australia (from where the Apprenticeship Office in Brisbane made a submission) and Chile, to mention a few. Copies were requested by the libraries of Irish universities and there was some discussion in Dail Eireann. Resolutions were proposed and debated at the annual Conventions of Teachers Unions and Associations and at IVEA Congresses. In so far as its aim of promoting a discussion on apprenticeship was concerned, Apprenticeship - A New Approach, was an outstanding success.(34) Commenting on the document at the ICTU seminar, one trade union official remarked: 'When had the Irish Times ever before published a leading article on apprenticeship'!

At the beginning of the discussion, the reaction was rather mixed, with reservations expressed regarding a number of the proposals. However, as these were explained more fully at the many meetings, discussions and seminars, a more balanced view of what AnCO was trying to achieve developed. Initially, in spite of the carefully-phrased Foreword, some of the craft unions were under the impression that AnCO staff had released the document without the authority of the Council. Members of the Industrial Training Committees also felt that there had been insufficient consultation with them before it was issued. On the educational side, some of the statements made concerning educational release were considered to be very critical of that sector, and to show a lack of appreciation of its contribution to apprenticeship. It was felt here also that there should have been prior consultation. The main criticism, eventually,

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centred on Section 7, - Continuous Education During Working Life - and the subsequent Report to the AnCO Council referred to this as follows:

AnCO's reference to the education of the apprentice, as distinct from his practical training, tended to be viewed as an intrusion into an area where AnCO had no competence and there was a tendency to use emotive catch-phrases such as 'robots', 'morons', 'factory fodder' and 'automatons' to discredit the AnCO views expressed in this Section.(35)

However, in the end, there was general agreement that the discussion document was timely, that it had initiated an excellent national debate on apprenticeship, that traditional apprenticeship was no longer meeting the real needs either of the apprentice or of the economy, that radical reform was essential and:

if there was to be a professional and systematic approach to the training of apprentices, there was no real alternative to the AnCO proposals.(36)

#### **The Reaction of Employers:**

Employers and their organisations were generally in favour of what was proposed. They wanted their apprentices to get a good initial training, acknowledged the problems of providing this in the workplace and would prefer AnCO to do it in a systematic way, in industrial training centres. An important consideration was that there should be sufficient skilled manpower to service industrial growth and new developments, and that this should be achieved at minimum cost to them. In fact, they argued that off-the-job training should, like education, be paid for by the State. It was pointed out that, as the apprentice was a vital



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member of the production team of the small employer, he could not afford to be without him for a long period of off-the-job training nor to pay him wages during it.

In its submission, the Confederation of Irish Industry doubted the possibility of moving to a three year apprenticeship in one step, but if the school leaving age were to be raised to sixteen it might be possible to reduce the period further. In relation to the question of apprentices' wages while in training centres in the first year, the Confederation made this point:

... it is inequitable that AnCO should be prepared to carry the cost of apprentices' wages during the first year for a certain quota of the intake. The basis of these proposals seems to be a feeling that apprenticeship is properly an extension of the general educational system and, in this light, the possibility that AnCO would bear the full cost of apprentices' wages in the first year should be considered more seriously.(37)

The Federated Union of Employers considered that an immediate reduction of the apprenticeship period to three years across the board was not feasible and that, while the principle of shortening the period was generally acceptable, each trade should be looked at separately. It recommended that AnCO should actively encourage the establishment of in-company training centres, with full financial support. It was considered that an intensive period of training in the first year was preferable to the existing system of day and block release, and that off-the-job training should take place in an industrial environment. They were impressed with the AnCO training centres and suggested that:

Vocational Schools and Regional Colleges should be equipped and staffed in such a way as to provide comparable training facilities.(38)

The Construction Industry Federation was in favour of a three year apprenticeship and pointed out that, in practice, many apprentices already operated as fully-fledged craftsmen in their fourth and fifth years. The proposal that examination results should not be an essential qualification for entry to apprenticeship, and that aptitude tests should be used as an aid to selection, found favour with the Federation:

In an era when examinations have become a 'must' for practically all careers, it is refreshing to find that the emphasis in this particular case is put on the reality of aptitude rather than the formality of academic ability.(39)

The Federation also made the point that AnCO had suggested that off-the-job training should take place within the vocational education system and that this answered the charges being made that there was an attempt at a 'take over' by AnCO.

The first employer body to develop an industry-based apprenticeship system under the 1931 Act, the Society of the Irish Motor Industry, set up a special committee to examine the proposals. A reduction to a three year apprenticeship was considered 'a very drastic step' and the Society was concerned about the social consequences of taking young impressionable apprentices away from home for an extended period in the first year, and advocated that this should not exceed six months. For the same reason, day release was preferable to block release, as the apprentice could commute daily to his home. The Society would not agree to any lowering of the educational entry qualifications 'unless the present

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standard of primary education was substantially improved'. A particular concern of the Motor Industry was the question of compensation for the loss of the wages paid by an employer to an apprentice while on off-the-job training, should that apprentice decide to leave before completing his apprenticeship.(40)

Among individual employers who made submissions was the Director, Atlasta Tool and Engineering Company, Sligo, who strongly recommended the recruitment of girls as apprentices, stating that they would make excellent toolmakers. Samuel E. Holmes Ltd., an engineering firm in Monasterevan, had this to say in relation to existing syllabi and examinations:

The syllabus level in schools is certainly satisfactory if open to much improvement and enlightenment, but the most alarming facet is the contrast between certified examination results achieved by individuals, on the one hand, and the actual demonstrable knowledge on the other hand. This would, perhaps, imply that the examinations were passed by dint of 'cramming' at the last moment, and are therefore not worth tuppence!(41)

Perhaps the best summary of what AnCO was trying to achieve was made by the Personnel Manager, Clondalkin Paper Mills, when, having stated that the review would be of immense value to apprentices, industry in general and, more globally, the national economy, wrote:

... for the most part your analyses, proposals and conclusions represent the best compromise in a complex situation.(42)

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**Reactions of the the Trade Unions:**

As far as the trade unions were concerned, initial reaction tended towards suspicion of what was being proposed, but as the discussions progressed there was a swing, in most cases, in favour of the proposals, except for those which would affect the supply of skilled workers. Their views could be summarised as follows: that they, like the employers, wanted the apprentice to get a good training; they approved of what they had seen on the pilot apprentice courses in the Training Centres; they wanted the education of apprentices provided for, and expected AnCO and the educational sector to see to this; but, above all, they were concerned about the jobs and job security of their members. Any proposal, therefore, which would tend to increase the supply of craftsmen, and over which they would have no control, was viewed with suspicion. Among these were the reduction of the apprenticeship period to three years, the concept of intake quotas, craft training for adults and girl apprentices.

Most of the trade union submissions were comprehensive and well structured but a few tended to be quite negative. The National Union of Sheet Metal Workers of Ireland saw the publication of the Discussion Document as 'a take over by AnCO' of apprenticeship which had to be resisted, and stated, 'we have no intention of allowing our Vocational system to be by-passed or shunted into a minor role'. It was hoped 'that the AnCO New Approach will be consigned to the waste paper basket'.(43) The Automobile, General Engineering and Mechanical Operatives' Union, on the other hand, made the following comment:

The AnCO discussion document 'A New Approach' has certainly revitalised the Apprenticeship Scene, and has brought the Apprentice 'Out of the Gloom' and given him a 'Place in the Sun'.(44)

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The Ancient Guild of Incorporated Brick and Stonelayers' Trade Union, in its submission, was very critical of AnCO's past performance in the supervision of the apprenticeship system. It stated:

AnCO's policy is obvious, absolute control of apprenticeship training, recruitment and selection of all apprentices is their aim. High sounding language and pious aspirations such as contained in 'Apprenticeship, A New Approach' will not alter this fact. Stripped of the padding, the policy is revealed in all its nakedness as even a cursory examination of that Organisation's record since 1967 indicates quite clearly. .... yet we are expected to give the green light to their taking over such training, ... (45)

The Electrical Trades Union pointed out that it would have no objection to the radical changes proposed, provided that the end result could be seen as an improvement on the present system. It felt that too much emphasis was being placed on moulding the man for industry instead of developing him as an individual and that specialised training over three years would tend to produce operatives rather than skilled men. The Irish National Painters and Decorators' Trade Union, which had been very supportive of national apprenticeship schemes since the introduction of the 1931 Act, in its submission, approved of the proposals in the report of the Construction Industry sub-Committee and, where the proposals in the discussion document corresponded with these, was in favour of them. The Union was, however, totally opposed to 'the startling proposal by AnCO staff for a drastic reduction in the period of apprenticeship from 5 to 3 years'. If this were introduced 'we have no doubt that within a period of 5 years the Trade would be literally flooded with journeymen, already adding to our traditional problem of unemployment'.(46)

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The Irish Transport and General Workers Union, in its submission, was critical of the 'narrow view' taken of apprenticeship in the document and outlined the concept of apprenticeship that should prevail as follows:

... .. as primarily an education and training period during which the apprentice is given both craft skills and a complementary education which will enable him to judge contemporary human and social issues.(47)

The Union also posed the question, as to whether or not it was desirable to continue to think of apprenticeship as a particular training which is isolated from other forms, and stated that 'it might be timely to cast the net wider and see it as one type of training experience amongst many others'.(48) The question really being asked was one of social equity; why should the current limited range of designated apprenticeship employments receive special treatment from the State? Should there not be an integrated programme for the training of all young people for work, of which apprenticeship would be one part? The Union tended to agree with most of the AnCO proposals except those relating to educational entry qualifications, education during apprenticeship, the manpower information unit and any change in funding that would involve doing away with the levy/grant scheme. It considered, also, that the period of apprenticeship should, initially, be reduced to four years, and reviewed after experience of the new proposals had been adequately assessed. The Union suggested that AnCO should commission major research into appropriate methods of assessment for apprenticeship

#### **Irish Congress of Trade Unions Seminar:**

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions made no specific submission but did organise a two-day seminar in Dun Laoire, on the 2nd.

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and 3rd. February, 1974, to discuss the AnCO proposals. This was attended by forty-six delegates from sixteen affiliated unions and was chaired by the General Secretary, Mr. Ruaidhri Roberts. At the seminar, eight of the unions present outlined the submissions they had made to AnCO, following which the delegates divided into three working groups to study the proposals, the groups reporting back the following day. Two of the groups called for the withdrawal of the AnCO document and the establishment of a National Steering Committee, a proposal put forward by the Teachers Union of Ireland. The seminar concluded with a panel discussion, at which proposals to set up a National Steering Committee and a Curriculum Development Unit were supported by the delegates. Publication of the AnCO document was considered beneficial in that it had got widespread publicity and would ultimately lead to a better deal for apprentices. A Report on the seminar was prepared by ICTU and submitted to the Council of AnCO as representative of the views of the trade union movement.(49)

#### **The Reaction of the Educational Sector:**

The main concerns of the educational sector were:

that the proposals put too much emphasis on training and not enough on education

that apprenticeship was a continuation of education and that the apprentice was a student and not a young worker

that there was a lack of educational competence in AnCO and that this would be reflected in the design of curricula

that the AnCO proposals would down-grade the educational involvement in apprenticeship with consequent effect on the utilisation of educational facilities and on staffing in the colleges.(50)

and the executive Report to the Council added:

It proved difficult to get educationalists to examine critically the AnCO proposals as solutions to practical problems, and instead they tended to criticise AnCO and the 'philosophy' of the document.(51)

#### **The Views of the Department of Education:**

In its submission, the Department of Education, while agreeing in general with the aims of the proposals as set out in the document, stated that 'It would contend that current arrangements for apprenticeship education are to a large extent achieving these aims', and also that, 'The Department does not agree that the present system of apprenticeship is out of date'.(52) It did not consider that the discussion document provided evidence of the need to reform the existing apprenticeship system, and resented the publication of criticisms of the educational input into apprenticeship courses. It expressed reservations on many of the proposals in the document and found the section, Continuous Education during Working Life, to be 'totally unacceptable', on the grounds that, in its view, it circumscribed the right of the apprentice to improve his general education. It agreed, however, with national certification, a reduction in the period of apprenticeship, planned intake, craft training for adults, apprenticeships for girls and training modules for skilled men. With reference to industrial conditions it stated:



The Department agrees that apprentice education should provide, among other things, a bridge between school and work. It does not however agree to a total and immediate simulation of industrial conditions in the training and educational situation and contends that the process of learning is quite different to that of production and adjustment must be made accordingly.(53)

It proposed three alternatives to the AnCO system - one based on entry at Group or Intermediate Certificate level, the second on entry at Leaving Certificate level, and the third for adult apprenticeships.

#### **The Views of the Teachers Union of Ireland:**

By far the most comprehensive submission received came from the Teachers Union of Ireland. The 53 page well researched paper, which was, in itself, a tribute to the efficacy of the Discussion Document, had been prepared by the Executive, following reports by a working party of the Union, a survey of its members, and a special delegate conference. The submission was released at a press conference on 26 June, 1973. It was critical of the fact that the issues had to be debated on the basis of the already published AnCO proposals, and maintained that the views of interested groups should have been sought before publication. The Union acknowledged that the review was timely, but its submission tended to concentrate on the philosophical aspects of apprenticeship rather than address the practical problems of the existing system. It summarised its overall position as follows:

We place more emphasis on the apprentice and on the industry than on the job. The AnCO document places too

much emphasis on training and not enough on education. We would like to see this situation reversed. (54)

A reduction in the period of apprenticeship to three years, subject to consultation with individual craft unions, was acceptable, as was certification at the end of apprenticeship. In relation to off-the-job training in the first year, the Union's position was that it would 'visualise an array of off-the-job packages emerging and not necessarily all pressed into the first year', and recommended that this initial training, and any further modules, should all take place in vocational schools. It was critical of AnCO's supervision of training on-the-job, but supported the adverse comments on existing facilities in the education sector stating:

The criticisms in the Document of existing facilities is justified but it must be made clear that this Union has been in the forefront down through the years advocating the necessary improvements.(55)

The Union recommended the establishment of a National Steering Committee for apprenticeship with representation from all the bodies with responsibility in that area. This would be chaired by the Department of Education and would co-ordinate the work of similiarly constituted Regional Apprenticeship Boards, responsible, in their areas, for all apprenticeship matters. The establishment of a curriculum research and development unit, located within the Department of Education, with a director and an assistant director, with educational backgrounds, was also proposed. This should have the necessary permanent support staff, including educational and industrial psychologists, and with the finance to initiate in-service training in curriculum design for teachers. It was agreed that training syllabi needed to be reviewed, 'though we vehemently reject that such review be performed by AnCO, who working alone are unqualified for the task'. The teacher would not become an

automaton 'to peck as directed by any outside body'. A general comment was:

There is much that is attractive in the document. But a fundamental weakness, apart from other weaknesses discussed later, is that it consists only of a criticism of the existing system and proposals for a single alternative model.(56)

At the TUI Annual Congress at Easter, 1974, a motion rejecting the AnCO proposals, proposed by the Dublin City Colleges, was passed. In spite of this, however, it was obvious that the opposition was confined mainly to the Dublin area and that there was a fair degree of support for the proposals among vocational teachers in the Regional Colleges.

#### **The Reaction of the Union of Students in Ireland:**

Another well presented submission was made by the Union of Students in Ireland. It supported a number of its views with a survey, involving apprentices in the Dublin Colleges and in the Sligo RTC, some of whose comments on the existing system were included in an appendix to the submission. The USI efforts to represent apprentices was resisted by the craft unions and tended to raise the ire of employers, especially when apprentices took part in USI protest marches while on educational release. In a reference to the proposals, the Union considered that 'far from being radical, they are designed only to make apprenticeship more efficient in a narrow industrial sense', and, 'The faults in the document stem from a fundamental flaw viz. that the underlying philosophy of the document is never once discussed'.(57) AnCO's philosophy was, according to the USI, that the purpose of the apprenticeship system was to supply industrial manpower and this was inherent, also, in the 1967 Industrial Training Act, which needed to be

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substantially amended or changed, and provision made for apprentice representation. The primary recommendation was that apprenticeship should be absorbed into the formal education structure and that responsibility for it should pass to the Department of Education and the NCEA. The final conclusion was that the AnCO proposals ignored the ideals of democracy and social justice, and that philosophy should be discussed before structures. With regard to the comments of the apprentices surveyed, many welcomed the review, quite a number were in favour of a reduction in the apprenticeship period, as they saw it to their financial advantage, and some were critical of AnCO's performance in its supervisory role. There was one comment from an apprentice in relation to off-the-job training:

At present I attend AnCO, Ballyfermot, and I have learned more in five months than I would have learned in one year, six months on site.(58)

The USI also organised a seminar on apprenticeship in Liberty Hall at which the debate was, at times, heated.

#### **General Comment on the Discussions:**

The discussion period lasted for about a year and by June 1974, the Apprenticeship Review Group had prepared a document for consideration by the AnCO Council entitled, New Apprenticeship System - Report and Recommendations.(59) This was in three parts and consisted of a report on the discussion, recommended decisions, a suggested Council statement and preces of all submissions. (Council members were also supplied with full copies of all written submissions). The Report summarised the views of the groups and individuals who had contributed to the discussion, both in written submissions and in subsequent meetings with AnCO staff. In relation to the recommended

decisions, the approach adopted by the Review Group was to take each proposal made in the Discussion Document in turn, summarise separately the views expressed by employers, trade unions and the educational sector on that particular proposal, synthesise these, add a number of relevant points for consideration by the Council and then formulate recommendations on the proposal which, in the opinion of the Review staff, were likely to be generally acceptable. A number of additional proposals, not made in the Discussion Document, but which had been put forward by various groups during the discussion, and which found general acceptance, were also recommended to the Council. The Report and the Recommendations were then considered at a number of special meetings of the Council at which firm decisions were finally reached. Twenty major decisions affecting the future of apprenticeship were made by the Council and all, except that in relation to a reduction in the period of apprenticeship, were made by unanimous decision. One employer and one trade union member voted against a reduction and another employer representative abstained. It was significant that at this stage, the Council of AnCO, who distanced themselves from the proposals initially, had, by and large, accepted 'ownership' of them at the end of the discussion. The Council finally decided that its decisions should be published not later than 1st. November, 1974, and that any discussions with the Departments of Labour, Education and Finance should take place well in advance of that date.(60)

Detailed discussions then took place involving the Departments of Labour and of Education and AnCO, but their duration far exceeded the original time-frame and the Council decided to postpone the publication of its decisions until they were completed. Following these discussions some changes were agreed. Most of these, however, were mainly of a drafting nature and did not materially alter the decisions of the Council. In the case of the educational entry qualifications, however, where AnCO was statutorily required to consult with

the Department of Education before making changes, AnCO felt that to adopt the Department's recommendations would depart substantially from the decision of the Council. When the discussions with the Departments of Labour, Education and Finance were completed, this issue was again referred to the Council. At another special meeting, held on 7 October 1975, the original decision was upheld with a modification that, in respect of each craft, particular subjects should be recommended as desirable. In addition, the requirements specified for a reduction of one year in the period of apprenticeship for holders of Leaving Certificate qualifications were made less liberal.(61) There were two important changes in timing. The Council had decided that the change over to the new system should begin forthwith, with the aim of full implementation by 1979. At the request of the Department of Education, the date of general commencement was set for 1st. September, 1976, with full implementation by 1981. This modification was intended to emphasise that there would be a gradual introduction of the new scheme, and to allow for suitable monitoring arrangements. It was also felt that to proceed with the changes in the middle of a recession, caused by the second oil crisis, might inhibit acceptance of the new system. At the meeting on 7th. October, 1975, eighteen months after the launch of the Discussion Document, the Council of AnCO ratified its decisions on a revised apprenticeship system and authorised the publication of the document, The New Apprenticeship - Decisions of Council of AnCO.(62) One trade union member still objected strongly to the decision to reduce the period of apprenticeship to four years, and an employer member expressed reservations and suggested that a decision on the matter should be deferred for a further year, and the position re-examined then in the light of the prevailing economic circumstances.

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#### 4 The New Apprenticeship

The Foreword, in the Decisions document, stressed the need for a skilled workforce as a vital requirement for industrial development and the importance of ensuring that training continued, despite the recession, to ensure that the skills needed would be available when the economy picked up again. Apprenticeship, therefore, although only one area within the overall field of training, was of vital importance. The review that had taken place over the past two years :

has subjected the present apprenticeship system to a searching examination and has provided valuable comments and suggestions on the improvements needed and the best means of achieving them. There has been general agreement on the need for reform and a fair consensus on the principal shortcomings ... (63)

Because of the number and variety of the interests involved, 'disagreement and even controversy' was to be expected in the debate. However:

The Council in arriving at its decisions, has taken account of conflicting views and has sought in every case to achieve the best possible balance between them.(64)

To emphasise that the points raised concerning education throughout the discussion had been taken on board, special reference was made to the provisions for the education of apprentices and to the participation of educationalists in the provision of curricula. The concern that craft unions might have about the possible effects of some of the decisions on the supply of craftsmen was also referred to, with an assurance that there would be full consultation with them on apprentice intake.

**The main decisions on the format of the new system were:**

**Off-the-Job Training:** A period of off-the-job training would be provided for all apprentices in their first year, in approved apprentice training centres where industrial conditions would apply. A total of 3,000 places would be needed of which, Education would provide 1,500, AnCO 1,000 and Industry 500. Appendix A of the New Apprenticeship set out the requirements for a simulated industrial environment.

**Educational Release:** All apprentices would attend day or block release courses in vocational schools or colleges, without loss of pay, in the first three years of their apprenticeship. The duration of courses to be the equivalent of at least one day per week for the academic year.

**On-the-Job Experience:** After the initial training in the first year, apprentices would undergo on-the-job experience for the remainder of their apprenticeships with their employers. During this period, AnCO would provide an effective monitoring system.

**Length of Apprenticeship:** For apprentices recruited after 1st September, 1976, the Period of Apprenticeship would be a mandatory four years. Apprentices with four Grade Ds at Leaving Certificate level would serve a mandatory three years. These periods would be reviewed again in 1981.

**Curriculum Advisory Committee:** A Curriculum Advisory Committee, under the joint auspices of AnCO and the Department of Education, and representative of employer, trade union educational and training interests, would be set up to formulate outline training and education syllabi and to approve detailed curricula for apprentices. The Committee would be assisted by expert working parties for each trade and by a unit within the Curriculum Development Section of AnCO.



**Testing and Certification:** In principle there would be a system of compulsory testing and certification to national standards for apprentices, and a National Craft Certificate would be issued. The Curriculum Advisory Committee, assisted by expert working parties, would prepare a document, The Testing and Certification of Apprentice Craftsmen.

**Ladder to Higher Levels:** Discussions would take place between the Department of Education, the NCEA and AnCO on the development of a detailed scheme based on this proposal.

**Educational Entry Qualifications:** The statutory minimum educational requirements for entry to apprenticeship would be Grade D in any three subjects at Group or Intermediate Certificate level. Aptitude tests would be encouraged and, in respect of each trade, particular subjects would be recommended. Exemptions could be granted in certain cases.

**Manpower Information Unit:** This Unit would be set up within the Research and Planning Division of AnCO to provide and interpret information on manpower training needs.

**Location and Provision of Training Facilities:** Sufficient off-the-job training places would be provided within AnCO, in Regional and other Technical Colleges and within industry to provide off-the-job training for apprentices in their first year. Grants would be available, under certain conditions, to employers who provided off-the-job apprentice places and AnCO would use spare capacity within industry on an agreed basis.

**Adult Apprenticeships:** Action on this proposal would be confined to locations where there was rapid industrial growth and a shortage of skilled workers. In such circumstances, AnCO would initiate discussions with trade union and employer interests aimed at establishing craft courses for adults in training centres in these locations.

**Training Modules for Skilled Men:** Short courses for skilled workers, released on full pay for such training in AnCO centres, would be provided without cost either to the worker or to the employer. In the case of a skilled worker who had to leave employment to avail of up-dating of skills courses, AnCO would provide the training free and would pay the worker the basic skilled rate while on such courses. The onset of the recession, and the consequent unemployment among craftsmen and apprentices, had created a situation to which a response was needed and the Council decided, as part of the New Apprenticeship, that unemployed craftsmen and apprentices should, where possible, be provided with training courses. In these cases also, the basic craft or apprentice wage would be paid while in training.

**Skilled Training for Women and Girls:** In March 1975, the Council had received the Report of the Working Party on Girl Apprentices,(65) which it had set up in 1974, and had already made decisions on the basis of this Report. A number of girls had been recruited and were undergoing apprentice courses in AnCO Centres and further places were being provided in 1975/76. On the whole, it was found during the discussion, that while there was general agreement, in principle, that there should be no discrimination, there was no great commitment to the concept.

**Undesignated Trades:** AnCO's future policy in relation to the designation of trades and other occupations was set out as follows:

Flexibility of approach which will allow for the inclusion in formal training schemes of existing (non-designated) trades and newly developing occupations which have a high skill content.

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Emphasising formal training as a vital requirement for the attainment of proficiency in skilled occupations and the de-emphasising of the traditional time-serving concept in apprenticeship as a form of training.

Likely developments in the Common Vocational Training Policy of the EEC.(66)

**Financial Considerations:** The Council considered that 'The principle that the State and industry should contribute to the costs of apprenticeship training was soundly based and should continue'.(67) It considered, too, that because of Ireland's special circumstances, an application should be made to the ESF to help finance off-the-job apprentice training. On this basis, therefore, the Council decided:

that the State with assistance from the ESF, if available, should bear all capital and operating costs of the new system;

that employers should bear the wage costs of apprentices recruited for existing industry, while on off-the-job training in the first year and on educational release in subsequent years;

that, in the case of apprentices being trained for new industries, the State should bear the wage costs during off-the-job training in the first year;

Note: At this stage, a 50% ESF subvention had become available for off-the-job training of apprentices, who were not yet recruited by employers, who had been selected from the unemployment register and for whom there was the likelihood of employment after training. This subvention covered, not only wage costs, but also a contribution towards operating costs, overheads and depreciation.

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that, in the case of small firms, for which the payment of wages during off-the-job training in the first year could be too heavy a burden, AnCO would assist by placing with them AnCO sponsored apprentices, who had completed off-the-job training at the State's expense.

On the basis of an annual intake of 3,500 apprentices, the additional costs, in respect of AnCO and the Department of Education, over the period 1976 to 1981, were estimated to be of the order of £1.8m capital and £2.2m annual operating costs.

**Additional Proposals:** A number of suggestions were made by various parties during the discussions which the Council decided should be implemented. These were:

The provision of an Information Booklet for Apprentices; a Guide to the Selection, Employment, Induction and Training of Apprentices; a Pre-Paid Postcard to enable apprentices contact a training adviser; Courses in Apprenticeship Supervision for craftsmen and supervisors; a General Advisory and Welfare Service for Apprentices and a Special Apprentice Recruitment Procedure in the National Manpower Service.

**Implementation Dates:** The Council instructed the AnCO Executive to draw up a plan to implement a change-over to the new system to begin on the 1st. September 1976, with the aim of full implementation by 1981, and concluded by stating:

The Council hopes that the framework it has outlined will be accepted as one in which the views of all concerned were carefully considered and which seeks to reconcile the best interests of apprentices with the manpower needs of the economy.(68)

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**Problems with the Provision of Training Places:**

At its meeting on 28th. October 1975, the Director-General informed the Council that the New Apprenticeship Document had been published and widely circulated to all the interests concerned and that the Industrial Training Committees and the AnCO/VEC Consultative Committee had been briefed beforehand. He reported that no adverse comments on the Council's decisions had been received. However, a major difficulty was to arise in relation to the 1,500 apprentice places to be provided in the educational sector. Discussions took place between the Department of Education and the Department of Finance on the provision of the necessary funding, but the Department of Education representative had reported to the Council, at its meeting on 14th. September 1976, that the main problem for his Department was that the necessary funds had not been committed by the Department of Finance. This was a major set-back which threatened to jeopardize the whole scheme. The Council, however, re-affirmed its commitment to the provision of sufficient off-the-job training places and instructed the Director-General to take up the matter with the Departments of Labour, Education and Finance. Discussions continued over the next six months, but, at its meeting on 31st. March 1977, the Director-General informed the Council that the Department of Education had expressed the considered view that it would not be able to provide off-the-job places for first year apprentices, except in the case of printing apprentices and possibly electrical apprentices.(69) It was eventually decided that AnCO would provide the additional 1,500 places over the implementation period, bringing its total to 2,500. A number of off-the-job apprentice courses were, however, developed in the educational sector, notably printing in the School of Printing, Bolton St., motor engineering at the RTC at Letterkenny, foundry work at the School of Trades, Bolton St., plastering and stone masonry in Limerick and plastering in Cork. Another interesting development was the off-the-job course for

apprentice dental mechanics conducted in the Dental School at University College, Cork.

**Period of Apprenticeship and Leaving Certificate Holders:**

There was a problem, also, with the three craft-based Industrial Training Committees, Engineering, Construction and Printing in relation to the period of apprenticeship, particularly the mandatory three-year period for holders of Leaving Certificate qualifications. The Committees sought a meeting with the Council to discuss this and also educational entry qualifications. Separate meetings were held with deputations from the Engineering and Printing Committees on 26th. October 1976, and having listened to their views, the Council undertook to consider them. As a result, it was decided that the three-year mandatory period of apprenticeship for holders of Leaving Certificate qualifications should remain in force, but on a voluntary basis only.(70) The Council also agreed that the Printing Committee should set its own recommended educational qualifications, the only Committee to do so. Very few apprentices with Leaving Certificate qualifications sought a three-year apprenticeship at the time: it was a period of recession with a lot of unemployment and they seemed to prefer to serve a four-year period than have to seek work as a craftsman at the end of a three-year period.

Another change, largely of an administrative nature, was made to the Council's Decisions at the request of the AnCO Executive. This related to the provision of grants to employers who set up their own off-the-job apprentice training centres. Instead of providing capital grants, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to pay an inclusive training fee, which would provide for depreciation as well as operating costs, where AnCO availed of spare training capacity.

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## 5 The Discussion - An Evaluation

Apprenticeship - A New Approach initiated a wide ranging debate on apprenticeship in Ireland and subjected it to a searching analysis. All the relevant interests became involved and every aspect of the system was examined - cultural, social, economic, educational and pastoral. It generated a tremendous amount of interest and remained a live issue in the public press from May to October, 1973. Writing in The Education Times on 21st. June 1973, the Director-General of AnCO, Mr. Jack Agnew, remarked that a friend tried to dissuade him from issuing a discussion document saying, 'you'll get the minimum of discussion and the maximum of abuse'. There was certainly some abuse and antagonism but this was to be expected in any effort to make changes, some of them radical changes, especially in a system with the traditions of apprenticeship and the involvement of so many interest groups. On the other hand, there was a great deal of genuine and constructive discussion and exchange of views from which all who took part in the debate benefited and which substantially influenced the final outcome.

In the public debate the liveliest and most heated exchanges took place in the area of apprentice education. AnCO's insistence on 'relevance' was interpreted by the TUI as 'narrowly based training' which would produce 'factory fodder'. AnCO was 'out of touch with contemporary thinking in educational philosophy'. In AnCO's view the vocational schools were out of tune with the needs of the apprentice - a young worker who had 'left school' - and out of touch with the real world of industry. They were confusing 'education' with 'schooling'. The insistence on general education for apprentices seemed hollow when no similar concern was evident on behalf of other young workers. For several months the columns of The Education Times were enlivened by these rather provocative exchanges, and, though they expanded the debate on

the nature of apprenticeship, it was perhaps unfortunate that they introduced a note of recrimination into the discussion, which took some time to abate. With hindsight, it might be conceded that the section on education in the AnCO document could have been presented with more sensitivity.

A positive result which emerged from the discussion was the development of a rapport, and mutual understanding of their respective positions, among the individuals who were later to become responsible for the implementation of the new scheme. In the initial stages of the discussion at any rate, there was a feeling that the TUI, through its affiliation to the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, had sought to influence the craft unions unduly in organising opposition to the AnCO proposals.

In the end, what emerged from the whole process was a scheme which embodied a professional approach to apprentice training, agreed by and under the control of the Council of AnCO, whose membership was representative mainly of employers and trade unions. It was built, to a large extent, on a consensus established following a debate to which all the interests concerned had made an input. Although apprenticeship schemes in member states of the EEC had been studied, the end product could be regarded as largely 'home-grown' and suited particularly to Irish economic and social needs at the time. Even though it would be enforceable under the Industrial Training Act, it had been developed along the lines of the 'preferred option' proposed by Sean Lemass in 1952, when he set out to reform apprenticeship on the basis of voluntary cooperation rather than by mandatory legislation.



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- (18) Ibid., p.40.
- (19) Ibid., Annex 2, pp.44,45.
- (20) Ibid., p.14.
- (21) Ibid., p.15.
- (22) Ibid., p.16.
- (23) Ibid., p.19.
- (24) Ibid., p.15.
- (25) Ibid., p.20.

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- (26) Ibid., p.20.
- (27) Ibid., p.23.
- (28) Ibid., p.25.
- (29) Ibid., p.31.
- (30) Ibid., p.32.
- (31) Ibid., p.34.
- (32) Ibid., p.41.
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- (34) Report and Recommendations on the Discussion Document Apprenticeship - A New Approach.(Unpublished AnCO document, 20/6/74) pp.1 to 3.
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- (38) Submission : Federated Union of Employers in respect of AnCO Discussion Document on Apprenticeship. Sept. 1973.
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- (41) Submission: Training by Apprenticeship, Samuel E. Holmes, Ltd., Monasterevan, 27/7/73.
- (42) Submission - Apprenticeships - Clondalkin Paper Mills.
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- (44) Submission: The Automobile, General Engineering and Mechanical Operatives Union to AnCO on Discussion Document, Apprenticeship - A New Approach.
- (45) Submission: Ancient Guild of Incorporated Brick and Stonelayers' Trade Union.
- (46) Submission: Irish National Painters and Decorators' Trade Union, Suggestions Regarding the Recent AnCO Staff Discussion Document.
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- (51) Ibid., p.7.
- (52) Apprenticeship - A New Approach: Comments of the Department of Education, p.1.
- (53) Ibid., p.8.
- (54) Teachers Union of Ireland, Summary of Observations on AnCO Apprenticeship Discussion Document, 26/6/73.
- (55) Ibid.
- (56) Ibid.
- (57) Apprenticeship - A Perspective. Submission by the Union of Students in Ireland to AnCO on the Training and Education of Apprentices. —
- (58) Ibid., Appendix 3.
- (59) Report and Recommendations on the Discussion Document: Apprenticeship - A New Approach, 20/6/74. op. cit.
- (60) Minutes, AnCO Council Meetings, 83rd. and 84th. Meetings, 27/6/74 and 25/7/74.
- (61) Ibid., 97th. Meeting, 7/10/75.
- (62) The New Apprenticeship - Decisions of Council of AnCO, (Dublin: AnCO - The Industrial Training Authority) Oct. 1975.
- (63) Ibid., Foreword, p.1.
- (64) Ibid.
- (65) Report of the Working Party on Girl Apprentices. (AnCO). March, 1975.
- (66) The New Apprenticeship, op.cit., p.9.
- (67) Ibid., p.9.
- (68) Ibid., p.11.
- (69) Minutes, AnCO Council Meeting, 110th. Meeting, 31/3/77.
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## Chapter Twelve

### IMPLEMENTATION : NEW APPRENTICESHIP

1976 - 1986

#### Outline of Approach:

The document, The New Apprenticeship - Decisions of Council of AnCO, was published on 17th. October, 1975 and the date for the commencement of its implementation was set for the 1st. September 1976. As already mentioned, there was some adverse reaction from the three craft-based Industrial Training Committees to the concept of a mandatory three year apprenticeship for holders of Leaving Certificate qualifications. This was eventually resolved when deputations from those Committees met the AnCO Council and it was subsequently decided that the three year apprenticeship, in such cases, should be voluntary and not mandatory. Apart from this, the general reaction was favourable, with the main interest groups accepting that the final decisions had, in fact, taken account of many of the points which arose in the course of the discussion. An article in Liberty, a monthly publication of the ITGWU, in February 1976, giving the views of the National Executive Council of that union, found 'most of the proposals acceptable', but commented:

Proposals on entry qualifications to apprenticeship and on skilled training for women and girls seem to have the weakest commitment. ....

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There must be a firm commitment by AnCO to advance training in hitherto undesignated areas. The shifts in skills in industry today must be reflected in the priorities of AnCO.

Young employees (18/19 years old) need more provision made for them to be considered for some of the extra apprenticeships. They should not all go to school leavers.(1)

In the interval between the publication of the Council's decisions in October 1975, and the effective commencement date in September 1976, a series of twenty five Implementation Programmes was developed which set down what had to be done to give effect to the decisions and which specified target dates. These programmes could be broadly grouped under twelve main headings:

changes in statutory apprenticeship rules, with adjustments in apprenticeship periods for existing apprentices

provision of off-the-job apprentice training places

establishment of the Curriculum Advisory Committee

development of a system of testing and certification, and the design of a National Craft Certificate

setting up of a Manpower Information Unit

provision of an effective on-the-job monitoring system

co-ordination and control, budgeting, use of levy-grant

publicity, information booklets and brochures, new administrative documentation, new log book, pre-paid postcard

girl apprentices, training for craftsmen and out-of-work apprentices, ladder to higher levels, adult apprentices

educational release courses

training for undesignated trades

continuous review, monitoring and evaluation.

**Apprenticeship Co-Ordination Committee:**

In November 1974, the Apprenticeship Review Group and the existing Apprenticeship Administration Section, had been amalgamated into a new Apprenticeship Services Division under the Training Advisory Services umbrella. (2) This Division was now given overall responsibility for the implementation of the new apprenticeship system which became 'a priority corporate objective' during the change over period until 1981.(3) At this stage, the two main training Divisions of AnCO, Direct Training and Training Advisory Services, both had operational responsibilities in the area of apprentice training. Direct Training was responsible for the operation of the Training Centres and, therefore, provided off-the-job training facilities and courses for apprentices. In addition, the Curriculum Development Unit was located within this Division and supplied curricula, course training material and a testing service for all courses conducted in AnCO centres. The Training Advisory Division, which included Apprenticeship Services, had responsibility for training within industry and for the operation of the Statutory Industrial Training

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Committees and the levy/grant system. Its role covered the recruitment and training of apprentices by industry, arrangements for off-the-job and educational release courses, monitoring of apprentice training on-the-job and the operation of the levy/grant schemes. Research and Planning Division, which reported to the Executive Director Training, provided information on national and regional manpower requirements and training needs. The implementation of the new system required, therefore, the operational involvement and effective co-ordination of the apprenticeship activities of these various groups. This was achieved through the establishment, in 1975, of an Apprenticeship Co-Ordination Committee which was chaired by the Manager, Apprenticeship Services, and which had representatives from Direct Training, Training Advisory Services, Curriculum Development, and Research and Planning. It was hoped at one stage to include a representative of the Department of Education on this Committee but this did not come about. In the period to March 1983, approximately fifty meetings were held and, in general, the Committee worked well. However, problems arose in relation to the co-ordination of developments within Direct Training Division, which for productivity reasons, wanted a rapid build-up of apprentice training places and which led to high levels of AnCO sponsorship of apprentices. Training Advisory Services, on the other hand, preferred a more gradual approach based on industry sponsorship. The Committee was replaced by a task group, responsible for apprenticeship control and co-ordination within AnCO, which operated partly by a 'matrix management' approach. This arrangement, introduced in 1983, was to prove not very effective and lasted only for a short period.

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**Change of Apprenticeship Rules:**

The decisions taken by the AnCO Council required changes to the existing statutory Apprenticeship Rules as follows:

Abolition of the apprentice registration fee

Changes in the period of apprenticeship to provide for a four-year and a three-year period

Changes in the educational entry qualifications.

The existing position was that all current Apprenticeship Rules had been enacted under the 1959 Apprenticeship Act, but, although this Act had been repealed by the 1967 Industrial Training Act, all Rules, Orders or Statutory Instruments made under it were continued in force by virtue of Section 49, Transitional Provisions, of the 1967 Act and these could be revoked or amended by the AnCO Council.(4) To ensure that the new Apprenticeship Rules would be compatible with the 1967 Act, the intention was to make these rules under Section 27, Apprentices, of the Industrial Training Act (1967). Provision was made in this Act whereby a breach of such Rules would constitute an offence for which penalties were provided.

There was, however, a difficulty with the proposal to make new apprenticeship rules under the 1967 Industrial Training Act. The 1959 Apprenticeship Act had provided for the designation of trades, and consequently its Rules applied to all apprentices in those trades which had been designated. On the other hand, the 1967 Act provided for the designation of industrial activities, and, therefore, any Rules made under its Section 27 could only apply to apprentices in designated industrial activities. Seven industrial sectors had been designated by AnCO: Construction; Engineering; Printing and Paper; Textiles;



Food, Drink and Tobacco; Clothing and Footwear, and Chemical and Allied Products, and all apprentices in these sectors would be covered by Rules made under Section 27.(5) However, some organisations, such as the Defence Forces, and some activities, for example the manufacture of dentures were not covered by designation orders. In addition, some bodies, such as the ESB, in the case of the Engineering Designation, were specifically excluded. Apprentices in such organisations or engaged in such activities would not, therefore, have been covered by Rules made under Section 27. It was decided, in the circumstances, that the best approach, in the short term, was to amend the existing (1959 Act) Rules, as provided for under the transitional provisions of Section 49 of the 1967 Act. There was a legal problem with this approach, however, in that, even though apprentice Rules, either continued in force or amended by the AnCO Council under the transitional provisions, were legally valid Rules, it was not an offence under the 1967 Act to breach them and, consequently, persons who did so could not be prosecuted. Subsequently, it was found possible to introduce a special Industrial Designation Order, which had the effect of including all apprentices not otherwise included in the seven designated industries, and this cleared the way for the making of apprenticeship Rules under Section 27 of the 1967 Act. However, efforts by the AnCO Executive to do this did not succeed because of the difficulty of getting employer and trade union representatives on the AnCO Council to agree in the specific area of new apprentice dismissal rules.

To comply with the decisions of the AnCO Council in relation to the New Apprenticeship, the following changes and amendments were made to the existing Apprenticeship Rules, under Section 49 of the Industrial Training Act:

The apprentice registration fee was dispensed with by the provisions of Statutory Instrument No.131 of 1976,

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Industrial Training Act (Revocation of Initial Registration Fee) Order, 1976. The effective date was the 1st. July, 1976.

The Apprenticeship Educational Qualification Rules (1959 Act) were amended by Statutory Instrument No.204 of 1976, Apprenticeship Educational Amendment Order, 1976, to provide that the minimum educational entry requirements would be Grade D in three subjects in the Group or Intermediate Certificate examinations or in an equivalent examination. Provision was made for exemptions with the approval of AnCO. The effective date was the 1st. September, 1976.

The Period of Apprenticeship Rules (1959 Act) were amended by Statutory Instrument No.205 of 1976, Period of Apprenticeship Amendment Order, 1976, to provide for a four-year apprenticeship period, and for a three-year period for a person with at least 4 Grade Ds in the Leaving Certificate or in an equivalent examination. The effective date was the 1st. September 1976. This amendment also provided for a six months probationary period in the case of all apprenticeships. As a result of the deputations from the three craft based Industrial Training Committees already referred to, this amendment was further amended by Statutory Instrument No. 57 of 1977, Period of Apprenticeship Amendment Order, 1977, to provide that the three-year apprenticeship for persons with Leaving Certificate qualifications would be by agreement and not mandatory. The effective date was the 1st. March, 1977.

The AnCO Council was conscious of the effect that a change in the Period of Apprenticeship Rule would have on on apprentices recruited before the effective date for the application of the new Rule, i.e. 1st September 1976, and stated:

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... AnCO shall initiate discussions between employer organisations and trade unions in regard to adjustments in the period of apprenticeship for young persons who are serving apprenticeships which commenced prior to that date.(6)

Action to initiate such discussions had commenced as early as March, 1976. By November, agreement had been reached between the Federated Union of Employers and the Federation of Craft Unions (Engineering Trades) on adjustments in the Period of Apprenticeship for pre 1st. September, 1976 apprentices. Pay rates for apprentices based on a four-year apprenticeship had also been agreed.(7) These adjustments, effective from 1st. January, 1977, provided for a 4½ year period for apprentices recruited between 1st. July 1972, and 30th. June 1973, and a 4 year period for those recruited after 1st. July 1973. Apprentices who had commenced training between 1st. January and 30th. June 1972, were deemed to have completed their apprenticeships on 1st. January 1977. Similiar arrangements were agreed, sometime later, between the Construction Industry Federation, the Society of the Irish Motor Industry and the Printing Employers' organisations and their respective unions. On legal advice, it was decided by the AnCO Council that these adjustments should not be the subject of statutory regulations.

#### **Provision of Off-the-Job Places:**

The inability of the Department of Education to provide the 1,500 apprentice places in the VEC sector created serious problems for AnCO in the implementation of the New Apprenticeship. In the first place, coupled with the continuing economic recession, it provided an opportunity for some of the Industrial Training Committees to put pressure on the AnCO Council to defer implementation for a further year, i.e. to

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1st. September 1977. The Council resisted this pressure and, on a number of occasions, reiterated its decision to proceed with the new system and, in so doing, considerably enhanced its position as the authority in the area of apprenticeship. Secondly, it meant that the full implementation date had to be pushed back from 1979 to 1981, as AnCO now had to make up the educational sector's short fall in places and adjust its plans so as to provide 2,500 places instead of the 1,000 it had agreed to, and 922 of which were already available at the end of 1976. A major development of the AnCO Training Centre network was underway and it was not a difficult matter to make the necessary alterations. A considerable amount of detailed work was undertaken by the Manpower Information Unit in Research and Planning Division, in association with the Apprenticeship Co-Ordination Committee, to provide overall national and regional apprentice intake figures on which plans for the provision of off-the-job places could be based. In June, 1977, Research and Planning Division produced a document, Location of Adult and Apprentice Training Facilities, which was approved by the Apprenticeship Co-ordination Committee and which formed the basis of a plan for Regional Managers to provide the necessary training places. The work of the Manpower Information Unit was augmented by a major independent study commissioned by the Construction Industry Training Committee, The Training and Employment Needs of the Construction Industry in Ireland 1980-85.(8) Tentative figures for the requirements of craftsmen up to 1990 were projected in a number of trades by the Manpower Information Unit.

Whereas reasonably satisfactory information was provided for planning purposes in the short term, a significant jump in first year apprentice intake following the introduction of the new system, - from 2,235 in 1976 to 4,218 in 1979 (9), an 88.7% increase,- followed by large scale unemployment among apprentices as the recession returned in the early 1980s, made

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accurate forecasting extremely difficult. However, by January 1978, 1,648 apprentice places were available in AnCO Centres and a further 1,358 were planned to be available by 1981, making a total for AnCO of 3,000.(10) By 1983, of a total intake of 3,633 first year apprentices, 3,226 (88.8%) were undergoing first year off-the-job training. Of these, 2,773 (76.3%) were in AnCO Centres and 453 (12.5%) in centres in industry.(11) While it was held in a number of quarters that the provision of industrial conditions and disciplines would not have been feasible within the educational sector, it was regrettable that the original idea of providing off-the-job training for a significant number of apprentices within that sector did not materialise. Had it done so, three models of apprentice training, in industry, in Industrial Training Centres and in the educational sector would have been available for a subsequent evaluation on which to base further developments.

**Apprenticeship Curriculum Advisory Committee (ACAC):**

In its Discussion Document, AnCO proposed that apprentice training and education syllabi should be drafted by its specialist staff and should be based on job analysis. In detailed discussions on this proposal later, the Department of Education argued that job analysis was a suitable technique for determining only part of the syllabus. It expressed reservations on the competence of AnCO staff to provide full curricula and demanded a voice for educationalists in this work. From these discussions emerged the concept of a representative Curriculum Advisory Committee, including not only training and educational interests, but also an employer and trade union input. Following the publication of the AnCO Council's decisions on the new apprenticeship, a working paper, prepared by AnCO, was discussed with the Department of

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Education on 12th. February, 1976, and, following a number of meetings, agreement was reached on the composition, functions and term of office of the Committee and its attendant trade based Expert Working Parties. The Committee consisted of 5 employer, 5 trade union, 3 Department of Education and 3 AnCO members, 1 member from the Teachers' Union of Ireland and 1 member jointly nominated by the IVEA and AVEC, with an independent chairman. The term of office was three years and the basic function of the Committee was to advise the Council of AnCO, to which it reported directly, on all aspects of the training, education and certification of apprentices including:

advice as to policy and priorities in relation to curriculum provision

the nomination of the members of, and the direction of the work of the Expert Working Parties set up to advise the Committee as necessary

responsibility for the formulation of outline syllabi of training and education for apprentices

recommending the period of training and education to be undertaken by apprentices in particular trades, in accordance with the decisions of the Council of AnCO as outlined in paragraph 2 of 'The New Apprenticeship'

formulating and making recommendations on a system of testing and certification for apprentices

formulating and making recommendations on Complementary Studies

arranging for the periodic review of all curricula for training and education of apprentices.(12)

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Trade Expert Working Parties were to be set up, as required by the Committee, to advise it and to formulate outline syllabi of training and education. They were composed of representatives, mainly orientated to the specific trade in question, as follows: 2 ICTU, 2 employer, 1 Department of Education, 1 TUI, 1 AVEC, 2 AnCO and 1 curriculum expert, who acted as executive officer. They nominated their own chairpersons.

While the concept of a Curriculum Advisory Committee and Expert Working Parties would seem to be a very elaborate means of providing curricula for apprentice training and education, it developed out of the discussion process initiated by AnCO. It had the support of all the interest groups and was strongly promoted by the Department of Education, with whom AnCO were statutorily required to consult in relation to the education of apprentices. AnCO would have preferred a less elaborate structure but, in the end, was constrained by the outcome of the discussion and the demand for involvement, consultation and some element of 'ownership' of the curricula on the part of those involved in apprenticeship. The Committee was established on the 30th. June 1976, in accordance with section 37 of the Industrial Training Act, and Mr. Tomas O'Flóinn, Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, was appointed Chairman by the AnCO Council. It held its first meeting on 31st. August 1976. Initially the Committee was meant to be 'under the joint auspices' of AnCO and the Department of Education. This envisaged a common agreed policy and joint funding, but this never materialised. The funding and servicing of the Committee were undertaken totally by AnCO, and it was agreed that this should continue to be the position at a meeting with the Department in February, 1980.

An even bigger difficulty, however, was the absence of a joint AnCO/Department of Education specific policy in relation to the operation of the Committee. In the absence of tight guidelines,

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the Committee and its Expert Working Parties tended to operate outside the terms of reference given to it by the Council, and the Teachers' Union of Ireland attempted to exercise an undue influence in determining the amount of educational release, particularly in some of the Working Parties. AnCO management were at fault, too, in that standard formats for outline syllabi and curricula were not provided, and some Working Parties, in addition to specifying what was to be learned, also included where it was to be taught (a matter to be decided by the providers of the instruction, AnCO and the Department of Education). The same problem arose in relation to the time allocation as between the educational and training sectors, an issue which had already been largely decided by the Council of AnCO. In the Chairman's Report to the Council, on the completion of the first three-year term of office in August 1979, it was stated, in relation to the problems encountered both in the Committee and in the Working Parties:

The work of the ACAC and of its Expert Working Parties was protracted by conflicting interpretations of the 'New Apprenticeship - Decisions of the Council of AnCO'. Concern was expressed that certain constraints were imposed before the needs of the trades were examined.(13)

The Report went on to list seven problem areas for the Committee and a further four for the Expert Working Parties. Chief among these was the question of the amount of day-release for apprentices on first year off-the-job training. Some Working Parties attempted to build in 2½ days release per week into their curricula. This was resisted by AnCO as unnecessary, and impractical from the point of view of the operation of its Training Centres. There was a strong reaction to this from the trade unions on the grounds that AnCO had taken a unilateral decision in the matter. A deputation from ICTU discussed the issue with the AnCO Council, and there were

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meetings, also, between AnCO and the Departments of Education and of Labour before a compromise was reached, on the basis of 1½ days per week for engineering trades and electrical trades, and one day per week for construction trades.

In spite of these difficulties, however, a total of eighteen Expert Working Parties had been set up, four of which, Carpentry and Joinery, Electrical, Fitting and Shipwright, had already completed and submitted their curricula, and a further four, Motor Mechanic, Foundry, Hairdressing (an undesignated trade) and Compositor were close to completing theirs. Sub-committees on Testing and Certification and on Complementary Studies had also reported and these reports, too, were submitted to the Council. The latter Report was based on a research project, Complementary Studies - The Needs of Craft Apprentices, undertaken for the Committee by the Research and Planning Division of AnCO. In a reference to the future of the Committee, the Chairman's Report had this to say:

The ACAC and the EPWs have acquired very valuable experience in overcoming the constraints affecting the implementation of the 'New Apprenticeship' scheme. .... The performance of the individual members of the Expert Working Parties and the expertise they brought to bear on the problems encountered must be acknowledged and their contributions commended in all regards.(14)

Following consideration of the Chairman's Report, the Council, at its meeting on 28th November, 1979, issued two sets of quite specific guidelines, drawn up in consultation with Mr Tomas O Floinn. One was for the operation of the Committee and the other for the operation of the Expert Working Parties and they were intended to overcome the problems identified in the Chairman's Report. The structure of the Committee was altered to provide that AnCO should have five members instead of three

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and, in cases where issues of interpretation of Council's decisions arose, the Chairman would consult with the Director-General. In addition, the Chairman could, 'in exceptional cases on matters of grave importance', request that the Council should receive a deputation from the Committee to hear their views. Control was also tightened in that the format of outline syllabi was standardised and the section headings for a curriculum were specified as follows:

Overall Aim.

Organisation and Administration.

Outline Syllabus - Training Specification.

Training Plan/Detailed Syllabus.

Sample Exercises.

Assessment and Record System.

List of Tools and Equipment.

Recommended Workshop Layout.

The Committee was re-established, with a revised work programme, for a further three year period and held its first meeting on 24th March, 1980. Mr. Tomas O Floinn continued as Chairman until June, 1980, when he resigned due to pressure of work and was replaced by alternating employer and trade union Chairmen, who were members of the Committee. Under the new guidelines progress was much more satisfactory, though still slow. The first two National Apprentice Curricula, for the trade of Carpenter and Joiner and for the trade of Fitter, were presented to the Council for approval at its meeting on 25th.

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November, 1981. In a Progress Report on the implementation of the New Apprenticeship System, submitted to the Council on 9th. October 1984, it was stated that:

approximately 96% of the registered apprentice population is covered by newly developed National Apprentice Curricula which have been approved or are ready for approval.(15)

The Apprenticeship Curriculum Advisory Committee, with its concept of standard national apprentice curricula, was a new and radical departure. In its early stages, it had many teething problems as the various interest groups attempted to establish their own, sometimes conflicting, viewpoints. It was a slow and costly process and presented the staff engaged in curriculum development with a difficult task of direction and management. It was, in fact, a unique learning situation for all who were involved. It produced curricula which were very comprehensive, detailed and well presented, (they were highly commended by foreign visitors), but which were, possibly, too ambitious, and, in the educational treatment, could be considered more suited to technician than to craft level. Provision was made for periodic revision and, following the initial pilot stage and feed back from teachers and instructors, considerable improvements would have been possible. A major failing was that the specific requirements of industry in relation to apprentice training and education were not formulated as fully as desirable. The input of employers tended to be limited while the craft unions tended to align themselves with the educational representatives rather than with the employers. The result was some lack of balance as between the work-related and the school-related elements of the curricula.

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**New Documentation:**

As has been stated already, it was the intention of the Council of AnCO to make new Apprenticeship Rules under the provisions of the Industrial Training Act and, when these were in place, to repeal the old Cheard Chomhairle Rules. These had continued in force, and had been amended to provide for the revised apprenticeship periods and educational entry qualifications of the New Apprenticeship. However, even when the administrative groundwork had been done, it proved impossible to get employer and trade union agreement for this change, the main stumbling block being the making of new Dismissal Rules. During the review period, the Unfair Dismissals Act had been introduced, in 1977, by the Minister for Labour, Mr. Michael O'Leary. At the drafting stage, the AnCO Executive had ensured that apprentices would be covered by the new legislation and that, in fact, a special probationary period of six months, instead of twelve months as required for other workers, would apply in the case of apprentices. This was compatible with the Period of Apprenticeship Rules. The Executive considered that the Unfair Dismissals Act gave far better protection to the apprentice than the existing Dismissal Rules. In the first place, it recognised realities such as the current employment situation, where apprentices were being dismissed due to closures, lack of work and the general effects of the recession. The Unfair Dismissals Act presumed all dismissals, (subsequent to the probationary period), to be unfair unless employers could prove otherwise. Provision was made under the Act for reinstatement, compensation or re-employment in another position in the firm, in cases where employers failed to prove that the dismissal was fair. The Apprentice Dismissal Rules, on the other hand, provided only for a fine on the employer where an apprentice was dismissed without the consent of the AnCO Council. The fine could not be imposed, moreover, since an omission in the wording of the relevant clause meant that

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breach of the Rule was not an offence under the Act. No provision was made for compensation. From the trade union viewpoint, the apprenticeship contract was sacrosanct, and an apprentice, once employed, was entitled to complete his apprenticeship and could only be dismissed for wilful disobedience or grave misconduct. Tradition dies hard. There was no real difficulty with the remaking of any of the other rules under the provisions of the 1967 Industrial Training Act, but the dilemma of the Dismissal Rules prevented progress on the package as a whole. The dismissal of apprentices was to become a very sensitive issue later and AnCO had to make special provision to deal with it.

Apart from those difficulties, good progress was made in other areas. Apprenticeship Services issued a number of publications designed to provide clear information and to assist in the advisory and monitoring areas of apprenticeship. A comprehensive booklet, Apprenticeship in Ireland, was published in 1976, to provide information on apprenticeship matters for apprentices, those seeking apprenticeships, career guidance teachers, parents, employers and trade unions.(16) From 1981 to 1987 a booklet, Apprenticeship Statistics, was published annually, providing detailed information on apprentice numbers and activities from 1966 onwards.(17) A new standard 'log book', Record of Apprenticeship Training, was developed and issued to apprentices, who were responsible for keeping it up-to-date. As well as providing an outline of the programme to be followed during apprenticeship, the log-book also contained a Job Training Profile of the trade, setting out the practical work that the apprentice should undertake during his training. As part of an improved on-the-job monitoring system, a pre-paid post card was issued to each apprentice on registration, (and was also included in the log book), which enabled him to call on the services of an apprentice supervisor should he require assistance. A series of information brochures was prepared

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covering such topics as Training for Apprentices, Guidelines for Unemployed and Redundant Apprentices and Updating of Skills for Craftsmen. As will be seen later, a new National Craft Certificate was designed and an information brochure, Teastas Ceardaiochta Naisiunta - National Craft Certificate, was issued.

A number of research studies into apprenticeship matters were also carried out during the period by the Research and Planning Division of AnCO. These included Complementary Studies - The Needs of Craft Apprentices, Apprentice Attitudes in Dublin(18) and Drops-Outs from Apprenticeship.

A paper, Apprenticeship in Ireland, was prepared and issued at a meeting of National Experts on Assessments of Apprenticeship, organised by the OECD in Paris, in July, 1980. This paper was requested by the OECD and gave an international dimension to apprenticeship developments here and the meeting provided confirmation that these were generally in line with modern thinking in other countries. Finally, as the implementation of the New Apprenticeship involved a great deal of coordination and cooperation between the educational sector, including the Department of Education, the VECs and the Regional Technical Colleges, and AnCO and its Training Centres, agreement was reached between the Department and AnCO on the issuing of a Joint Memorandum covering operational matters, both bodies accepting responsibility for its circulation and implementation within their respective sectors. This was significant in that it represented the culmination of a considerable amount of discussion and consultation between AnCO and the Department on their respective roles and responsibilities in the apprenticeship area. It represented a high point in cooperation between the training and educational sectors.

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**Undesignated Trades and Special Schemes:**

The Council's decision on undesignated trades, i.e. 'that where training is needed it should be provided irrespective of whether the occupation is designated or not', allowed for a very flexible approach in promoting new training initiatives. In a number of such trades, formal training courses were either provided or were being supported by AnCO as part of its apprenticeship programme. These included Hairdressing, Sewing Machine Mechanic, Office Machine Mechanic, Radio/TV Serviceman, Motor Cycle Mechanic and Insulator, all in AnCO Training Centres and Baker and Coachbuilder, on educational release in technical colleges. In association with Board na gCapall, in the period 1976 to 1986, 44 Farrier and 14 Saddler apprentices were trained. In association with the Racing Apprentice Centre for Education (RACE), in the same period, 114 apprentice Jockeys were trained with AnCO support.

In order to provide for additional engineering and electrical craftsmen, initially at the request of the IDA to meet the needs of new industries, a number of special Apprentice to Craftsman schemes were organised, in association with semi-State bodies with very good training facilities. These included the ESB, CIE, and the Sugar Company and catered for some 2000 apprentices. Lapple trained additional toolmaker apprentices at its factory in Carlow and BIM provided a one year course for boat building apprentices at Skibbereen which provided training for 88 apprentices in the period 1976 to 1984.

Two interesting schemes for the training of additional apprentices were the AnCO/FUE Apprentice to Craftsman Scheme and the AnCO/SIMI Scheme. The AnCO/FUE Scheme was financed by the Employment Creation Fund of the first National Understanding in 1979 and it provided for the recruitment, in

1980, of 88 apprentices by member firms of the FUE additional to their normal intake. This scheme was extended for another 80 apprentices the following year.(19) The AnCO/SIMI scheme developed from an agreement between SIMI and the Government that, in return for a reduction in the VAT charge on the labour content of motor vehicle repairs, the motor industry would recruit additional apprentices. And, following pressure by AnCO and the Department of Labour in 1980, agreement was reached that the number of apprentices recruited by Local Authorities would be increased from 238 to 650 by December 1981.

It was not AnCO policy to designate additional trades; in fact the Discussion Document stated, 'It is not proposed that the existing statutory apprenticeship system should be extended...'. However, one additional trade was formally designated in 1981, that of Carton Maker in the printing industry, for which special training arrangements for apprentices were made in the London College of Printing. Also, existing designation orders for the Construction Trades and for the Motor Trade were expanded to include the trades of Construction Plant Fitter, Heavy Vehicle Mechanic and Agricultural Mechanic.

### **Unemployed and Redundant Apprentices:**

The first oil crisis in 1973 marked the end of a period of rapid economic growth, and a significant problem of unemployment and redundancy among apprentices began to surface around mid-1974. From about that time, a rolling total of approximately 1,500 apprentices notified AnCO of difficulties with their apprenticeships. There was a continuous movement into and out of this unemployed/redundancy category and three surveys carried out by AnCO indicated that about 25% of the number notified were actually out of work - of which 60% were



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in the Construction trades and 20% in the Motor trade. The AnCO Council was under considerable pressure, especially from the trade unions, to take action in the matter and, at its meeting on 28th. July. 1977, agreed the following policy:

to make every effort to ensure that an apprentice who completes the probationary period will have the opportunity to serve his or her full apprenticeship. The success of this commitment by AnCO will depend on the full co-operation of trade unions and employers.(20)

Action to alleviate the situation included updating of skills courses in AnCO Centres, places on educational block release courses, 'parking' with employers for work experience, placement on apprentice to craftsman courses in some semi-State companies and employment on Community Youth Training programmes. While on these courses and programmes, apprentices were paid their normal wages, and were given an accomodation subsidy if they had to live away from home. All of these initiatives qualified for ESF subvention - the payment of unemployment benefit would not have qualified - and helped to keep the apprenticeships 'alive' until the employment position improved. In fact, AnCO was in a position to cater for more apprentices than availed of its assistance. The Community Youth Training programmes provided work experience that ranged from projects as mundane as the building of toilets at Mountshannon pier on Lough Derg on the Shannon to the novel and exciting project of the refurbishment of the Irish College in Louvain, in Belgium. As a further encouragement to employers, an Apprentice Re-Employment Premium scheme was introduced by the Department of Labour in May, 1977, and, as an additional measure, AnCO established Apprentice Placement Committees on a regional basis. These initiatives represented a positive approach to the problems which had developed and succeeded in providing an alternative to the negative demands, from some

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quarters, that punitive action should be taken against employers who had let apprentices go and for whom the recession was also a problem.

In April, 1978, the issue of unemployment among apprentices entered the public and political domain, when a protest march and demonstration of apprentices, outside the AnCO Head Office and the Department of Labour, was organised jointly by the Plumbers' Trade Union (EEPTU) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). The demonstration was sparked off by the proposal of Messrs. H.A. O'Neil, a large mechanical services firm in the Construction Industry, to make 26 plumbing apprentices redundant later in the month. The daily and evening papers had reports and photographs of the march with the Irish Independent carrying the headline 'Apprentices lash AnCO in March with Priests' (21), a reference to four Franciscan priests who were chaplains in the Dublin Colleges of Technology and who took part in the demonstration. The march also received coverage in the English News bulletin on Radio Moscow! Further demonstrations were promised, but these never materialised and AnCO succeeded in defusing the situation by making provision for the apprentices on its various programmes. However, the general problem of unemployment and redundancy among apprentices continued into the 1980s and the cost of making adequate provision for them became an issue later with both the Departments of Labour and Finance. This was partly due to the decision in the New Apprenticeship document that out-of-work apprentices, while on AnCO programmes, should be paid the normal apprentice rates of pay instead of the usual, and lower, training allowance paid to other trainees. There was also the question of the balance between the intake of first year apprentices sponsored by AnCO and the level of unemployed apprentices.

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**Ladder to Higher Levels:**

The concept of a ladder to higher levels for apprentices had only reached the pilot stage by 1984. A scholarship scheme, known as the AnCO Award for the Best Army Apprentice, had been introduced in 1977. This award took the form of a scholarship, of total value not exceeding £1,000, to enable an Army apprentice, normally in his final year, to take a course of two to three years duration in a third level educational institution, leading to the award of an NCEA Technician Certificate or Diploma. The selection was made by a Board of Officers appointed by the Army Chief of Staff as well as an AnCO representative. The Board also decided the course to be taken and its location. The presentation of the award was made at the annual passing out parade of Army or Air Corps apprentices. Up to 1984, eight such scholarships had been awarded to apprentices from the Army, the Air Corps and the Naval Service and the scheme was generally regarded as being very successful, a number of the apprentices subsequently achieving commissioned rank. In addition, a girl apprentice, in the painting and decorating trade, was awarded a scholarship to a third level college in London to study interior design. At its meeting on 9th. October, 1984, the AnCO Council approved a joint AnCO/Dublin Institute of Technology pilot scheme for the award of thirty 3rd. level scholarships for persons who had completed craft apprenticeships.(22)

**Testing and Certification - The National Craft Certificate:**

The final element of the New Apprenticeship to be put in place was testing and certification. The Council's decision was: 'In principle there shall be a system of compulsory testing and certification to national standards for apprentices'. The Curriculum Advisory Committee, assisted by an expert working

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party, was to prepare a document entitled The Testing and Certification of Apprentice Craftsmen, and AnCO and the Department of Education were to design a National Craft Certificate. The Council gave a fairly broad brief to the Committee, suggesting a combination of continuous assessments, terminal examinations and the involvement of local assessment boards, with provision for a retest in the case of apprentices who failed to reach the required standards initially. The Expert Working Party on Testing and Certification, set up by the Curriculum Advisory Committee, was quite representative, with members from CII/FUE, CIF, ICTU, TUI, Department of Education, AnCO and, in a consultative capacity, the NCEA. It was chaired by Mr. George Murphy, the TUI representative and submitted its findings, Report of the Working Party on Testing and Certification of Apprentice Craftspersons, in August, 1979. This was approved by the Curriculum Advisory Committee and submitted, in conjunction with the Chairman's report on the first three year term of office of the Curriculum Advisory Committee, to the AnCO Council at its meeting on 28th. November, 1979. The Curriculum Advisory Committee recommended that the National Craft Certificate should be awarded by the AnCO Council where apprentices fulfilled the following criteria:(23)

- (a) have been registered with AnCO
- (b) have completed the statutory apprenticeship period
- (c) have passed their first year basic training test
- (d) have satisfactorily completed the educational programme
- (e) have been assessed as competent in the theory and practice of their craft.

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The Committee also recommended provision for reassessment in cases where an apprentice was not awarded a National Craft Certificate and, also, for the issue of a Statement of Completion of Apprenticeship to all apprentices who had served their time. (This Statement was to replace the Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship formerly issued by AnCO.)

The Council approved the Report and instructed the AnCO Executive, in consultation with the Department of Education, to draw up an integrated operational scheme to take effect from 1st. September, 1980. In the discussions which led to the issue of the Joint AnCO/Department of Education Memorandum already referred to, it was agreed to establish a Working Party involving AnCO, the Department and the IVEA to develop this 'integrated operational scheme'. Pending its setting up, two internal position papers were prepared to establish and agree the basis on which AnCO would conduct its discussions with the educational representatives. These began in April 1981, and, in all, 24 working meetings were held, including two with officials of the Department. The issues involved proved to be very complex and difficult and the Working Party, in an effort to get re-assurance that it was proceeding generally along acceptable lines, submitted an Interim Progress Report to the AnCO Council at its meeting on 23rd. February, 1982. The Report was acceptable to the existing Council, but, as it was completing its term of office, it recommended that it should also be referred to the incoming Council for its views. This was done at the September, 1982, meeting of the new Council and, again, the Report was found acceptable. The basic philosophy adopted by the Working Party and approved by both AnCO Councils was:

- (a) that the system of testing and certification should be fair to apprentices and to existing craftspersons

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- (b) that the emphasis for certification should be on the competence of the individual to work in the trade
  - (c) that the National Craft Certificate should be attainable by the vast majority of apprentices
  - (d) that the new system should be practicable and should utilise existing structures and facilities.(24)

The Working Party completed its Report, Testing and Certification of Apprentices, in September, 1984, and submitted it to the AnCO Council with a recommendation that, following initial consideration, it should be referred to the Curriculum Advisory Committee, the Department of Education and the relevant Industrial Training Committees for their views. The Report was then finally approved by the Council in December, 1985, with an effective implementation date of 1st. September, 1986. The level of involvement and the amount of consultation with the various groupings concerned with apprenticeship, which was a feature of the whole review process, while it did tend to slow decision making and resulted in a considerable overshoot of target dates, was considered essential to achieve acceptance and eventual sense of 'ownership' of the new system. This was expected to pay dividends in the long term. (However, in the event, the Government's White Paper on Manpower Policy, published in 1986, directed that a 'standards-based' instead of a 'time-served' basis for certification should be introduced as part of a revised apprenticeship system). The requirements for the award of the National Craft Certificate, for apprentices who completed their apprenticeships after 1st. September 1986, were that they should have:(25)

- (1) Been Registered by AnCO as apprentices.
- (2) Served their Full Period of Apprenticeship.

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- (3) Completed their First Year Off-the-Job course.
  - (4) Attended the Full Educational Release Programmes.
  - (5) Achieved a PASS GRADE in the following:
    - (i) 1st. Year Assessment Programme and Terminal Test.
    - (ii) Craft Theory Junior Stage.
    - (iii) Craft Certificate Senior Stage.

Additional craft - related subjects passed by apprentices would be included as 'endorsements'. It was also agreed, in principle, that a pass grade in the AnCO terminal test, on completion of first year off-the-job training, would be acceptable to the Department of Education as the equivalent of the pass grade, Junior Trade Practical Examination, for the award of the Department's Junior Trade Certificate

#### **Joint Certifying Body:**

The Report provided that the Department and AnCO would constitute the Joint Certifying Body for the award of the Certificate. This would be issued by AnCO, on application by an apprentice who met the requirements. These were listed under four headings: the Statutory Requirements of the Industrial Training Act, the Formal Training Requirements, the Formal Educational Requirements and the Approved Work Experience. Provision was made for the issuing of the Certificate, under certain specified conditions, to persons who had completed their apprenticeships before 1st. September, 1986, and an Appeals system was provided for. Operating Procedures for AnCO, the Department of Education and Vocational Education

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Committees were set down in the Report and a representative Steering Committee to oversee introduction, implementation, monitoring, appeals and updating of the tests in line with current technological practices, was to be set up. The Report also recommended that the testing system should be reviewed again in 1989. Finally, a National Craft Certificate was designed, and, as a tribute to traditional Irish craftsmanship, it had the Tara Brooch as a watermark.

While the National Craft Certificate was awarded only to apprentices who had fulfilled the necessary requirements, including the passing of compulsory tests and examinations, possession of the Certificate was still not essential to be accepted for employment as a craftsman, (although employers could specify it if they wished), or for membership of a craft union. Apprentices who had completed their apprenticeships and 'served their time' continued to be regarded as qualified, though not certified, craftsmen. While the Working Party did consider this aspect of certification, it was felt that to attempt to prevent young persons from earning a living by practising the trade to which they had been apprenticed for four years, though they had failed to obtain certificates, would not be practicable. It was hoped that the motivational effect of aiming to secure a National Certificate would, with the encouragement of employers and trade unions, eventually lead to a situation where the bulk of apprentices would be certified. This issue, and the anomalies it could create, will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter on Testing and Certification

#### **The New Apprenticeship - An Assessment:**

When the Review of Apprenticeship was initiated in 1973, there was, in general, grave dissatisfaction with the traditional



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system. There were shortages of craftsmen, and apprentice intake was considered inadequate in view of anticipated economic developments. Attendance at educational release courses was low and declining, and there were concerns about training on-the-job and the relevance of the content of release courses. There were reports that there were many unregistered apprentices and that the system was not being effectively monitored. With the exception of trades such as electrician, fitter and carpenter/joiner, apprenticeships were not considered an attractive career opportunity either by young persons or their parents. In a Progress Report - Implementation of the New Apprenticeship, (26) presented to the AnCO Council in October, 1984, progress was summarised as follows:

Apprentice population, 15,412 in 1975, was 21% higher at 18,649 at the end of 1983. In fact, the figure had peaked at 21,498, a 42% increase in 1980 (the last year of the five year apprenticeship). See Graph 1.

First year intake, 1,734 in 1975, rose to a peak of 4,219 in 1982, an increase of 143%, before declining to 3,633 in 1983, still 110% higher than in 1975. See Graph 2.

Educational release, 9,543 in 1975, had risen to 14,482 in 1982, an increase of 52%. In the period 1975 to 1983, a total of 94,150 apprentice releases were scheduled for attendance at educational courses. See Chart 3.

First year off-the-job training, 1,326 in 1975, had risen to 3,226 in 1983; 88% of the first year intake. See Chart 4. In global terms, in the period 1975 to 1983, 18,680 apprentices did off-the-job training in their first year. Sufficient training places were available to provide off-the-job places for the bulk of first year apprentices. AnCO Training Centres had an annual throughput capacity

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of 2,800 apprentices, while approximately 600 places were available in centres in Industry and a small number in the educational sector covering Printing, Plastering, Bricklaying and Foundry craftsman.

New curricula: by 1984, the Curriculum Advisory Committee had developed new comprehensive National Apprentice Curricula, catering for 96% of the registered apprentice population.

Testing and certification: a new system, leading to the award of a National Craft Certificate, had been presented to the AnCO Council for approval in October, 1984.

Educational entry qualifications: in 1979, 11% of the apprentice population had received educational exemptions; by 1984, this had decreased to 5%. The percentage of apprentices with Leaving Certificate qualifications had increased from 12% to 27% in the same period, while 68% had either Group or Intermediate Certificate qualifications.

Applications for apprenticeships: in 1983, the National Manpower Service had received 18,336 applications for 1,900 AnCO sponsored apprenticeships, which it had advertised, an indication of the increased popularity of apprenticeship as a career choice, even while allowing for the effects of a poor employment situation.

Period of apprenticeship: the period of apprenticeship had been reduced to a mandatory four years with effect from 1st September, 1976, and to three years, on a voluntary basis, for Leaving Certificate holders, from 1st. March, 1977.

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Log Book and Monitoring: a new log book had been developed and was beginning to replace the old one; a pre-paid post card call system was in operation; over 9,600 monitoring visits were made by apprentice supervisors to apprentices on-the-job in 1983. A course for in-firm Apprentice Masters was available for which grants were payable from levy funds. Overall control and administration was facilitated by the computerisation of all apprentice records.

Training for skilled men and out-of-work apprentices: suitable courses were designed and brochures prepared. In 1983, 254 craftsmen had availed of training, and, in the same year, 2,556 unemployed or redundant apprentices were catered for on AnCO programmes.

However, under the heading, Financial Considerations, the Report indicated that the implementation of the decision of the Council in this area had gone seriously wrong and stated:

Many employers had displayed a marked reluctance to meet their share of the costs of 1st. year off-the-job training i.e. the wage costs of apprentices. This reluctance is hardening and the position generally now is that employers do not accept, in the case of apprenticeship, the broad principle laid down by the Government and by AnCO that Industry should bear its own training costs.(27)

The employers' position appeared to be that first year off-the-job training was being funded by the Youth Employment Levy and by the ESF. [The Youth Employment Agency had been set up by the Government in 1981, to provide, among other things, for the training and employment of young persons, the costs to be met by a levy on incomes].(28) Apprenticeship was part of vocational education and training and should be funded by the State as was

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the training of engineers, doctors and nurses. Because of Government policy in relation to the maintenance of the skilled workforce, AnCO would, in any case, ensure that sufficient apprentices were recruited. There would be cost savings for employers in availing of the resulting supply of well-trained apprentices, who had completed off-the-job training at the State's expense, and whom AnCO would be seeking to place with employers, rather than recruiting and training their own. To a certain extent, this argument was sustained by a very rapid increase in the level of AnCO sponsorship of apprentices, from 486 in 1975 to 1,908 in 1983, resulting, mainly, from a Training Centre productivity agreement with instructors, which brought additional apprentice training places on stream very rapidly, at a time when recruitment by employers was low. The productivity agreement had also reduced the working hours of apprentices in AnCO Training Centres from the industrial norm of 40 hours per week to  $34\frac{3}{4}$  hours, and this was seen by employers as an undesirable move away from the concept of 'industrial hours and industrial conditions' which had been set out as a requirement of the New Apprenticeship approach.

While there was probably some validity in these arguments, other factors, such as the high costs of employing people, the level of employer PRSI contributions, the impact of protective labour legislation, and the financial difficulties resulting from the recession also influenced employers. In such a climate of economic uncertainty there would be a marked reluctance to enter into a contract to employ a person as an apprentice for a four year period. The result of all this was that the State was bearing an increasing proportion of the costs of apprentice training, vis-a-vis employers, and both the Departments of Labour and of Finance wanted this situation reversed. This position contrasted with that in Germany and in Britain where the employers were responsible for all costs other than those of educational courses for

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apprentices. The concerns of Labour and Finance, and the consequential reduced sponsorship of apprentices by AnCO, accounted for the reduction in apprentice intake and in the population of apprentices from 1984 onwards. See Graphs 1 & 2.

The reaction of apprentices to the new system is indicated by the results of a comparative study, Apprentice Attitudes in Dublin, involving two sets of apprentices, one trained by traditional apprenticeship methods and the other by the New Apprenticeship system. In relation to the latter group the research study states:

... we observed that the apprentices generally spoke very favourably of their first year off-the-job training course. The majority, 95%, found the course helpful, while 78.1% enjoyed it and all the sixty four apprentices interviewed found the instructors helpful. 'Good training' was selected as the best aspect of the course, while no one factor emerged as the worst aspect.(29)

When both samples of apprentices were asked for a general view of their training, only 5.1% of the 'new' apprentices felt that they would have been better if they had been trained traditionally, while 51.8% of the 'traditional' apprentices felt they would have been better had they got off-the-job training.

An indication of the improvements in standards over the period can, perhaps, be gauged from the performance of the Irish apprentice team at the 29th Youth Skill Olympics held in Sydney, Australia, in February, 1988. In a competition in which 351 young persons, representing nineteen countries from five continents, took part, the Irish team of eighteen apprentices, which included one girl, achieved 4th. place overall and, in the European context, finished ahead of Germany, France,

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England, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal and Leichtenstein. The Irish apprentices won two Gold medals, one Silver, one Bronze and fourteen Diplomas of Excellence, the best performance of any Irish team abroad since Ireland first entered the Competitions in 1956. Another interesting factor was that the medal winners came from widely scattered locations in Ireland, Kilkenny (Gold, Constructional Steel), Listowel (Gold, Gas Welding), Blacklion, Co. Cavan (Silver, Joinery) and Cork (Bronze, Industrial Wiring). The girl, an apprentice waitress trained by CERT, was in fourth place in her competition and was awarded a Diploma of Excellence.(30)

In September, 1986, the Government published the second White Paper on Manpower Policy (31) and indicated that it had decided to amalgamate the National Manpower Service, AnCO, the Youth Employment Agency and CERT under one body to be called the National Manpower Authority. In relation to apprenticeship, the White Paper stated that it would be reviewed in order to develop a system which:

- (1) is based on standards achieved rather than on time served
- (2) ensures a satisfactory balance between supply of and demand for apprentices
- (3) reduces the financial cost to the State while maintaining quality.(32)

This decision to initiate another full-scale review at this stage could be questioned. The quality of apprenticeship training was generally regarded as satisfactory and this was later verified by the Culliton Report. Instead of embarking on a full-scale review, which would take time and involve reactions from vested interest groups, the Government might

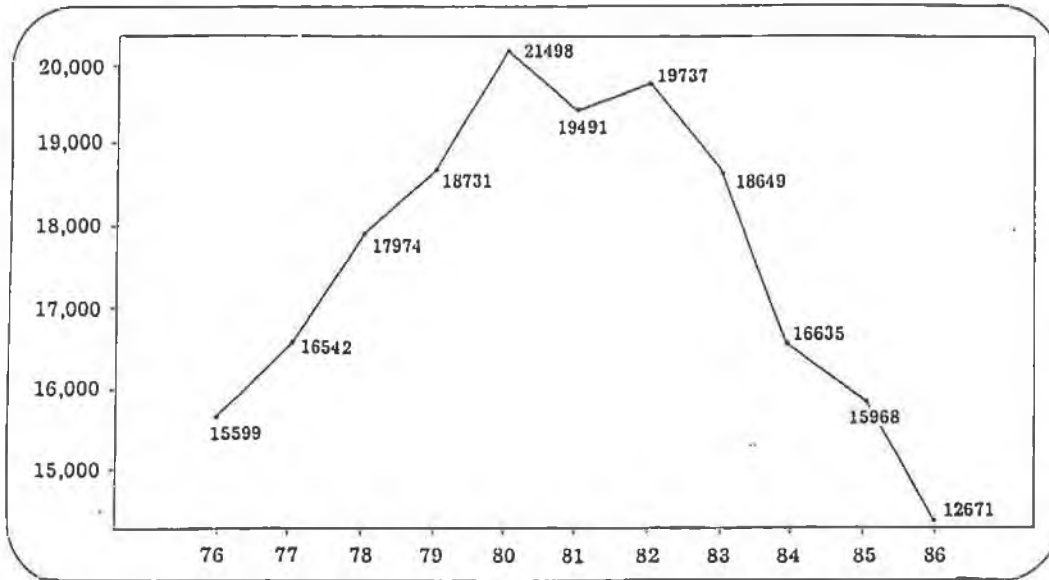
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focus on the main problems, viz the costs of apprenticeship and the fact that employers were off-loading these onto the Exchequer, and to introduce limited measures to remedy them. Employer dissatisfaction with the requirement that wages should be paid while the apprentice was in a training centre might have been alleviated by a more imaginative use of levy/grant schemes. The adverse economic situation increased pressure on employers to reduce costs, and the AnCO policy of providing a safety net for unemployed apprentices unwittingly gave employers the easy option of transferring some of their apprentice costs to the State. The inhibiting effect which the Unfair Dismissal Act and the Apprentice Dismissal Rules had on apprentice recruitment was not helped by the perception that the State would provide for long term manpower needs. Trade Unions, too, could have been more flexible in relation to apprentice wage rates and the education and training sectors could have been more cost effective by streamlining and reducing educational release and off-the-job periods. No doubt some of the difficulty in maintaining levels of apprentice employment and recruitment were due to the changes in technology whereby manual skills were being replaced by machines. In the case of the motor trade, for example, parts replacement and extended component life were substituting for repair work. Ultimately, however, it was the cumulative effect of the prolonged economic recession on employment generally, rather than the problems of apprenticeship in particular, which became the main focus of Government attention.

In July, 1987, The Labour Services Act (33) established An Foras Aiseanna Saothair - FAS- and provided for the dissolution of AnCO, the Youth Employment Agency, the winding up of the National Manpower Service and the transfer of their functions to the new authority. CERT, however, was to remain as a separate organisation. These developments, and the reason for them, will be studied in the next chapter.

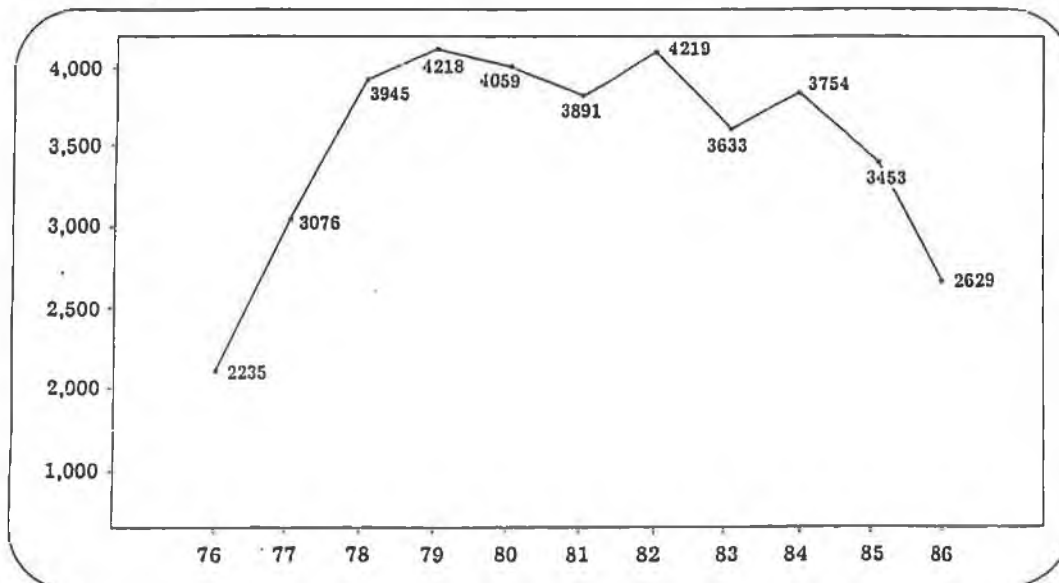
Graph 1.

Registered Apprentice Population 1976/1986



Graph 2.

Registered 1st Year Apprentices 1976/1986



(Source: Apprenticeship Statistics 1976 - 1986)



Chart 3.

Apprentice Day and Block Release Attendance 1976-1986

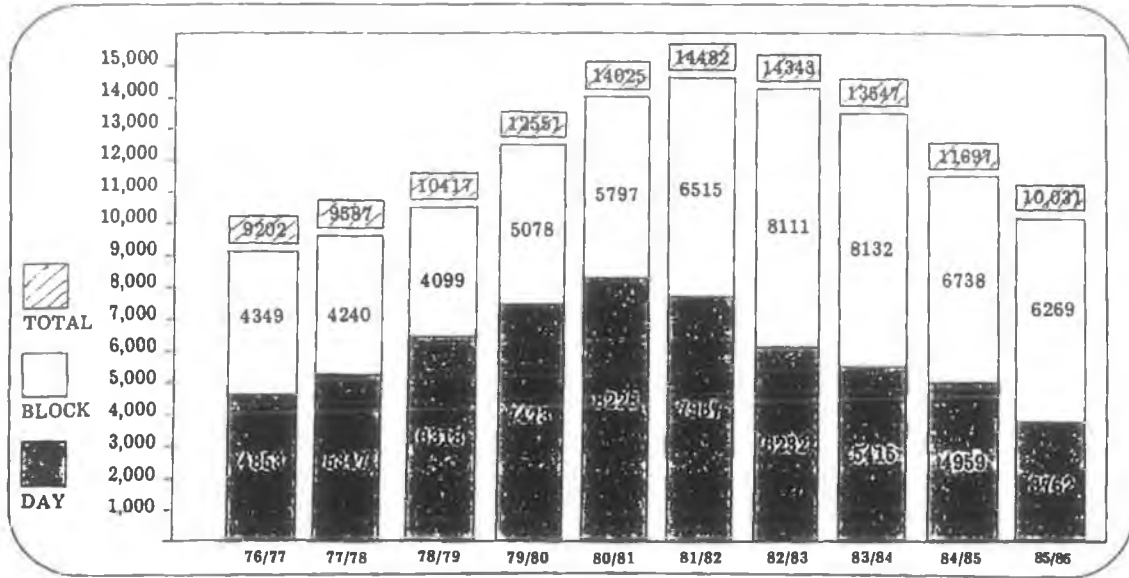
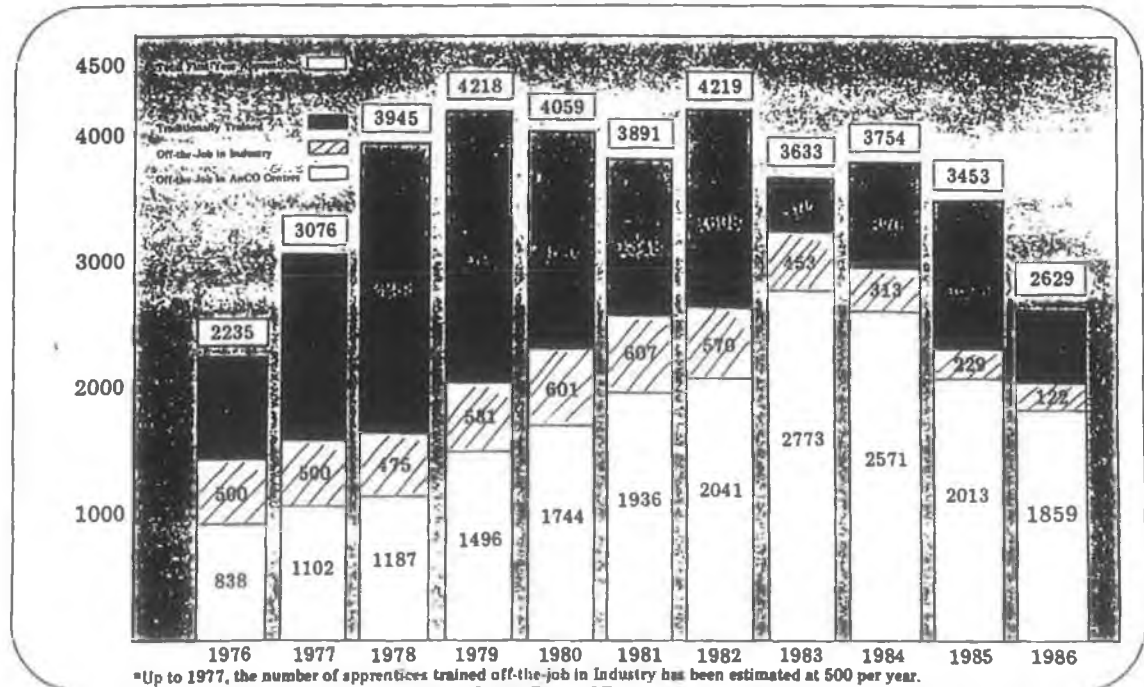


Chart 4.

Analysis of First Year Apprentice Training



(Source: Apprenticeship Statistics 1976 - 1986)

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Figure 6

THE NATIONAL CRAFT CERTIFICATE



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS — DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
AN CHOMHAIRLE OILIÚNA — AnCO — THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING AUTHORITY

*Teastas Ceardaíochta Náisiúnta*  
*National Craft Certificate*

**SPECIMEN**

*Deimhníonn sé seo gur chomhlíon an duine thuasluaite na riachtanais reachtúla agus gur chríochnaigh sé/sí go sásúil na cláir agus na scrúduithe a leag AnCO — An Chomhairle Oiliúna agus An Roinn Oideachais amach chun oiliúint agus oideachas a chur ar phrintísigh don cheird seo a leanas:*


*This certifies that the above named person has fulfilled the statutory requirements and has successfully completed the programmes and examinations prescribed by AnCO — The Industrial Training Authority and the Department of Education for the training and education of apprentices for the following trade:*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Doaglaín Ó Donnáin*  
Rúnaí, An-Roinn Oideachais

*P. M. Sherlock*  
Stiúrthóir Ginearálta, AnCO — An Chomhairle Oiliúna

Dáta: \_\_\_\_\_

 UIMHIR \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter Thirteen

### AN FORAS AISEANNA SAOTHAIR - FAS - AND APPRENTICESHIP

1986 - 1993

#### Overview:

In the period, 1986 to 1993, a number of major initiatives in the area of manpower policy were taken all of which impacted on apprenticeship. The first of these was the publication, in December 1985, of the Report of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), Manpower Policy in Ireland.(1) This was followed, in 1986, by the second Government White Paper on Manpower Policy,(2) introduced by Ruairi Quinn of the Labour Party, who was Minister for Labour and the Public Service in the Coalition Government. This introduced a new social dimension to manpower policy by emphasising provision to assist the unemployed, and in particular the long term unemployed, in addition to the previous aim of improving the quality of the labour force. As part of the organisational arrangements to give effect to the new policy it was proposed, that all the existing manpower agencies, AnCO, CERT, the Youth Employment Agency and the National Manpower Service, should be amalgamated under a new authority, to be called the National Manpower Authority, with their policy-making functions being transferred to the Minister for Labour. The organisational changes proposed in the White Paper were given effect in the Labour Services Act, 1987,(3) which led to the establishment, on the 1st. January 1988, of a new Authority, which was called An Foras Aiseanna Saothair (FAS), rather than the National Manpower Authority as

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proposed in the White Paper. The passage of the Labour Services Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas provided an opportunity for an extensive debate on manpower and training issues as a result of which, coupled with lobbying from the hotel and catering interests, CERT was excluded from the new body and retained its separate identity.

Specifically in the area of apprenticeship, the AnCO Executive, as part of the process of developing its Strategic Plan, had set up an internal staff review group which submitted its report, Review of Apprenticeship (4) in December, 1984. A number of submissions based on this Report were considered by the AnCO Council in June and July, 1986, and again in September, 1987, but the matter was not finalised. On the establishment of FAS in January, 1988, the Minister for Labour requested that the apprenticeship programme be reviewed as a priority. Another Discussion Document, also called Apprenticeship - A New Approach, (6) was published in December, 1989, and over 12,000 copies were circulated. One of the proposals in this document was the establishment of a National Apprenticeship Committee as an advisory body on apprenticeship to the Board of FAS. A report on the discussion was submitted in February, 1990, and the decisions of the Board of FAS on the format of a revised system were forwarded to the Minister for Labour in July, 1990. In January, 1991, in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) (7), the outline of a revised apprenticeship system was agreed by the Government and the Social Partners. One of the provisions in the Programme was that representative advisory committees should be established to oversee the implementation of the new apprenticeship system. Accordingly, the Board of FAS set up the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, with twenty-one members, on the 5th. September, 1991. (8) The issue of funding for the revised system was not settled but was to be discussed by the Government and the trade union and employer organisations

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in the Central Review Committee for the Programme. Apprenticeship had entered the realm of economic and social policy at national level.

In June, 1991, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr. O'Malley, established the Industrial Policy Review Group under the chairmanship of Mr. James Culliton 'to review and make recommendations on industrial policy in Ireland and on public policy generally as it effects industrial development'. This Group sought the advice of a number of consultants to assist in its assessment of specific aspects of industrial policy. One of the reports submitted to the Review Group, in February 1992, by Dr. Frank Roche and Mr. Paul Tansey, was Industrial Training in Ireland, in which it was stated that apprenticeship was 'the area where FAS makes the greatest direct impact on improving the real skills in industry'.(9) In April 1992, an Introduction to the promised Green Paper on Education was released and, finally, in June 1992, the Minister for Education, Mr. Seamus Brennan, published the long awaited Green Paper, Education for a Changing World which was 'intended to initiate a wide national debate' after which the Government would prepare a White Paper outlining a framework for a reformed educational structure. Among the issues considered in this document was the future involvement of the educational sector in the area of apprenticeship. It is intended to deal more fully with each of the developments referred to above in the following paragraphs.

#### **Decline in Apprentice Numbers from 1980 to 1988:**

Total apprentice numbers had peaked at 21,498 in 1980, the final year of the old five-year apprenticeship, while first year intake, under the new system, had reached a record figure of 4,219 in 1982. From then on, except for a partial recovery

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in 1984, and again, to a lesser extent, in 1987, there was a continuous decline in first year intake and, consequently, in total numbers, until 1988, when first year intake reached a low of 2,445 and total numbers were only 11,804. The position began to improve again in 1988, with intake climbing to 2,919 in 1991 and a total apprentice figure of 14,010.(10) In its Annual Report for 1981, AnCO, commenting on apprenticeship figures for that year, stated:

This bouyancy in apprenticeship augurs well for the future of Irish industry and represents a major contribution by employers to the provision of worthwhile jobs for young people.(11)

In 1982, however, AnCO was pointing out that, whereas the intake of apprentices in that year had reached a record figure of 4,219, a total of 1,844 had been recruited by AnCO itself to maintain intake at a level considered appropriate to ensure the availability of a skilled workforce. In that year, also, almost 1,500 apprentices, who had lost their jobs due to the economic difficulties faced by industry, had been provided with training courses to help them continue with their apprenticeships.(12) The position worsened in 1983, when, of a total first year intake of 3,633, only 1,919 were recruited by employers and there were 2,453 unemployed apprentices on the national register. The 1983 Annual Report commented:

Because of funding difficulties and the problems of placing AnCO sponsored first year apprentices in a contracting employment market, the likelihood is that the level of AnCO sponsorship will be further reduced during 1984 to 1,500 persons with a consequent reduction in employment opportunities for young people. There is need for a national examination of conscience in this whole area.(13)



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The funding difficulties referred to originated in a Government decision, towards the end of 1983, on the Estimates for 1984, that AnCO should take urgent steps to reduce the level of State sponsorship of first-year apprentices. In fact, the internal AnCO Review Group had already come to the conclusion that the level of AnCO sponsorship was too high and should not, in future, exceed an average of 10% of the apprentices sponsored by employers for first-year off-the-job training. It was considered that employers were taking advantage of the fact that AnCO normally topped up first-year intake, by cutting back their own recruitment, thereby reducing their own costs. Some employers were also by-passing the new system by continuing to train apprentices in the traditional way. Traditional intake which had been reduced to a total of 407 in 1983 had increased again to 1,211 in 1985, although by 1991, it had fallen to 803.(14) in line with an overall decrease in intake. It was becoming apparent, too, that some form of alternative funding arrangement was needed if the policy of off-the-job training for all first-year apprentices was to continue, with employers contributing their fair share of the costs and a consequential reduction in the contribution by the State. These were among the issues to be addressed in the internal review of apprenticeship initiated by AnCO as part of its own strategic planning process, and which also provided an input into an Inter-Departmental Review Group examining manpower policy.

#### **Report of the Apprenticeship Review Group, 1984:**

This Group was given very broad terms of reference which included the 'skill acquisition' process in apprenticeship; skill gaps; training and educational weaknesses in the system; costs; future staffing and facility requirements; restructuring apprenticeship on a broader base of occupations, and a modular

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approach, with an examination of the feasibility of an 'industry based' system with a significant reduction in periods to be spent in training centres and educational establishments. The Group was also instructed to study European apprenticeship systems, especially the German and Swiss models.(15)

In a reference to the previous review of apprenticeship, the Report, stating that the 1975 Decisions of the AnCO Council had been largely implemented, commented:

The provision of professional off-the-job training through a national network of AnCO Training Centres ..... has largely overcome most of the known weaknesses in the traditional apprentice training system. This, coupled with the revised educational qualifications rule, and the reduction in the period of apprenticeship from five to four years has brought the general framework of apprenticeship training and education into line with the current situation in this field in most European countries.(16)

The Report identified three major aspects of apprenticeship which now required attention. These were: Costs; Quality and Updating of Skills, and Equity. It listed a series of short-term and medium-term options aimed at addressing these areas. On Costs, it suggested the following short-term options:(17)

Reduce the length of off-the-job training which would release resources for other training courses.

Reduce apprentice training allowances (expected to meet strong opposition from trade unions.)

Reduce AnCO sponsorship levels, possibly in conjunction with improved incentives to encourage employer sponsorship.

Increase employer contributions towards the costs of apprenticeship training, (some form of apprentice levy was envisaged.)

Increase instructor/apprentice ratios to levels comparable with those in other countries.

As regards Quality and Updating of Skills, it proposed medium-term action as follows:

Develop a 'standards reached' system of qualification for craft status which would reduce the duration of apprenticeship.

Investigate the possibility of introducing the Master Craftsman concept, as in Germany.

Devise a system for regularly updating instructors' skills.

In relation to Equity, i.e. to give other young workers some of the training and educational advantages enjoyed by apprentices, it suggested, as a medium term option, that AnCO should:

Investigate the possibility of a 'National Youth Training Scheme'.

In this connection, the Report recommended the introduction of 'a national youth training scheme for all skilled occupations, including, and co-equal with, apprenticeship'. This was later to be piloted as the Youth Traineeship Initiative

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Details of visits made to West Germany (with 450 designated trades and 1.7m apprentices), Switzerland (with 300 trades and 90,000 apprentices), and Great Britain (no statutory control) to study apprentice training were included and on these the Report made this general comment:

The German, Swiss and British systems, in different ways, aim to reach identical goals, i.e. a variably trained workforce quickly responsive to change. The basic difference will probably be measured in societal terms - the continentals still value the social status conferred by the apprenticeship system - the British craft worker would appear to be prepared to discard it.(18)

Commenting on the quality of training in Germany and Switzerland, the Review Group found it difficult to compare quality standards as between these countries and Ireland, but did observe:

..... in Ireland the training facilities, the availability of training materials, instructor numbers, and curricula, compared more than favourably with most of the continental training centres visited.(19)

The Report included a study of the net costs of training an apprentice in Ireland and compared these with costs in Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland. The figures were:(20)

Ireland: £14,212.

West Germany: £10,615.

Switzerland: £9,486.

Great Britain: £9,728.

The figure for Ireland was in respect of training off-the-job, ('traditional' apprentices here cost £9,550), and it was pointed out that Irish apprentices were paid a percentage of the full craftsman's rate, whereas lower training allowances were paid on the continent.

#### **Cabinet Task Force on Employment:**

On the 9th June, 1986, the Minister for Labour wrote to AnCO in relation to a directive from the Cabinet Task Force on Employment, that the Council of AnCO should produce, within one month, an interim report putting forward specific proposals for changes in apprenticeship training.(21) The Report of the Apprenticeship Review Group formed the basis of a document, presented by the AnCO Executive, at a special meeting of the AnCO Council on 24th. June, called to consider the directive. This document, Review of Apprenticeship and the Development of an Integrated Youth Training Policy, outlined:

... a summary of the apprenticeship review with recommendations for the improvement of the apprenticeship system in the short term, and also recommendations for the broadening of the scope of apprenticeship in the medium term, and the development of a totally integrated youth training scheme in the longer term.(22)

This integrated scheme was to include the existing apprenticeship system, expanded to encompass many undesignated and new skills, and the many skilled occupations in industry, commerce and the services. It was suggested that, in consultation with the Department of Education, ways and means might be devised to provide, in their final year in education, a work orientated programme for those school-leavers who would normally leave school for employment in industry and the

services. Pre-employment skills would be developed through courses such as Work Foundation and Skills Development courses provided by AnCO. Workplace training would be the major vehicle for skills development and the Youth Traineeship Initiative, two pilot schemes of which had commenced in 1986, would be the model on which this would be developed. The approach suggested was based on the German and Swiss apprenticeship systems. The document proposed that the AnCO Council recommend that the Department of Labour should set up a Review Committee, under the auspices of that Department, 'to fundamentally review the apprenticeship system within the context of current developments in youth training policy'.(23)

In relation to the Cabinet directive, the Council's position was that it would be impossible to deal with such a complex issue as a review of the apprenticeship system within weeks. Such a review, by its very nature, would require consultation with trade union, employer and educational interests and could not be done in that time. It was clarified for the Council, that the immediate concern of the Government was the cost factor, and it was decided to concentrate on that issue. The Council considered that the broader issues, raised in the Executive's document, went far beyond what was called for in the Minister's letter and these would require a lot more debate and discussion. As regards costs, the Council requested that the Executive should provide, for its next meeting, information on the intake requirements of first year apprentices and what cost savings could be made. At its July meeting, the Council decided to reduce the level of AnCO sponsorship of first year apprentices by 365 in 1986/87, giving a cost saving of £3.3m, but pointed out that this would result in an underutilisation of apprentice places in its Training Centres and in a reduction of craft training opportunities for school leavers. The Council also decided that:

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there should be an early completion of a fundamental review of all industrial skill developments with a view to determining their relevance to meeting the future skill demands of industry. An integral component of this examination will be a review of the existing apprenticeship system which will take place during the period 1986/88.(24)

The Council went on to list some of the items that should be covered in this review, such as: the definition of a realistic duration of education and training for individual trades; craft status recognition on a 'standards reached' derived from 'a revised time served' basis; recognition, in relation to the length of apprenticeship, for time spent on appropriate youth training programmes; the introduction of the concept of the Master Craftsman; greater financial contribution by employers and more selective sponsorship in key areas by AnCO. The question of the payment of trainee allowances to apprentices, instead of a proportion of the craft rate, as a means of reducing costs, was deferred to be examined later.

#### **Youth Trainee Initiative:**

The result was that the concept of an integrated youth training policy, based on an expanded apprenticeship system, was not taken any further at that stage. However, the Youth Traineeship Initiative pilot schemes, involving some ninety trainees, which were underway, one in Dublin and one in Athlone, were completed and evaluated, with eighty of the trainees receiving certificates. This initiative was aimed at a large sector of the youth population, already in jobs in industry and commerce, who were not catered for by any training policy and who, consequently, did not receive the benefits of training and education enjoyed by apprentices. The approach adopted involved

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the design of a general job description and curriculum at national level and the modification of these, including the design of an individual training programme, to meet the particular needs of the trainee and the employing firm. On the pilot schemes, special courses, on a half day release basis, were provided for the trainees in the Training Centres in Athlone and in Baldoyle. One of the major difficulties, however, was the reluctance of some employers to allow release from work to undergo training. It was anticipated that schemes, such as these, would have formed an element of an integrated youth training policy had it developed.

#### **Continuation of the Apprenticeship Review:**

As directed by the AnCO Council, at its meeting in July, 1986, the review of the existing apprenticeship system continued. Consultations took place with some of the social partners including the Construction Industry Federation, the Confederation of Irish Industry and the Irish Congress of Trades Unions. A further discussion paper on apprenticeship, as well as an evaluation of the Youth Traineeship Initiative, was presented to the Council at its meeting in October, 1987. The core recommendations made were:

a standard approach to entry for apprentices both on and off-the-job

the introduction of a modular approach to training

a clear career progression for appropriate skill areas

a shift to industry meeting more of the costs of apprenticeship.



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more skill bands in the future encompassing new skill bands and occupations that were beginning to emerge in industry.(25)

The Council's approach was that the proposals outlined needed to be handled with great sensitivity and required refining before they could be progressed further. It was felt that the changes being proposed were based on very limited experience of the existing system. There was a need for formal consultations with the educational interests and other trade union and employer bodies and for an expansion of the financial implications set out in the paper. The White Paper on Manpower Policy had been published in 1986 and the Council, while it would agree that the State was meeting too large a proportion of the costs, had not accepted the implication in it that apprenticeship, as a system of training, was inefficient. The White Paper gave no indication of what these inefficiencies were or where they arose but it's statement was probably based on the NESC Report, Manpower Policy in Ireland, (to be considered later), which referred to 'discussions which we had with a wide range of interests'. Council members, on the other hand, who represented employers, trade unions and the education sector, had attended National and International Apprentice Competitions over the years and were in a position to judge Irish apprenticeship standards vis-a-vis those of other nations. They would agree that while it had its limitations and, while new developments could not be ignored, the problems with apprenticeship were caused by abuses of the system.

It was decided that a further paper on the outstanding issues would be presented at the December meeting of the Council. In the event, although there were three meetings of the Council in December, apprenticeship was not discussed again and the second review of apprenticeship, initiated in 1984, was still at the discussion stage when AnCO was dissolved on 31st.

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December, 1987. FAS was established under the provisions of the Labour Services Act on 1st January, 1988, and The New Apprenticeship, introduced by AnCO in September, 1976, following its first review, continued in operation.

**Comments on the Main Proposals in the Second Review:**

The initiatives proposed by the AnCO Executive were influenced by the demands of the Departments of Finance and of Labour for a reduction in costs, and in particular, in the level of State subvention of apprenticeship. Although the quality of off-the-job training was very good, the costs were high by international standards. It would have been possible to reduce these costs, without any great impact on quality, by some reductions in the periods spent by apprentices in Training Centres and on educational release courses. This was particularly so as the number of apprentices with higher educational qualifications, and hence enhanced learning capabilities, was increasing. The proposal that apprentices should be paid standard training allowances instead of apprentice wage rates - which were considerably higher in the case of unemployed third and fourth year apprentices on AnCO programmes - could result in significant cost reductions. This, however, would have met with trade union opposition and would have created problems for the trade union members of the AnCO Council. The proposal that employers should contribute more towards the costs of apprenticeship and so reduce the State's subvention, was also calculated to increase the level of 'ownership' of the system by employers. This, as has been shown in Germany, is a major factor in the success of any apprenticeship system, and tends to be lacking in Ireland. To this end, more imaginative use could have been made of the existing levy-grant system, possibly coupled with ESF subvention, to create a national fund for the training of

apprentices. Although a National Craft Certificate had been introduced as part of the first review of apprenticeship, the certification process had remained voluntary. The concept of a compulsory, 'standards-based', procedure to replace the existing 'time-served' system with its voluntary tests and examinations, was aimed at modernising apprenticeship and eliminating inefficiencies associated with one of its traditional aspects, viz the standard period of apprenticeship for all trades. It could also be seen as a means to the harmonising of certification in the context of EC membership. The difficulties inherent in trying to achieve it initially on a compulsory basis, and in one step, may not have been fully appreciated. Finally, the proposal that apprenticeship should no longer be a 'stand alone' programme but part of an integrated system for the training and education of all young people for employment was most desirable in terms of social equity - apprentices after all were a very privileged group in that respect. It should be a long-term goal, but it was somewhat unrealistic in the context of the financial restrictions sought by the Departments of Labour and Finance. However, suggestions in the review that some courses in the educational sector might be re-directed towards that end made economic, as well as social, sense.

#### **Manpower Policy in Ireland - NESC Report - December 1985:**

Meanwhile, at national level, another debate on overall manpower policy, involving education as well as training, was being undertaken under the aegis of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). This was to lead to the publication, in 1986, of the second Government White Paper on Manpower Policy. The terms of reference given to the consultants for the NESC study were:

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To examine and make recommendations on the role of manpower policy in the context of overall economic and social policy and to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of present training, placement and other labour market measures.(26)

The Report was in two main parts, Part 1 consisted of the Council's own comments on manpower policy in Ireland and Part 2, the report of a study on the subject undertaken by consultants commissioned by the Council. The consultants made forty-four main recommendations (27), not all of which were acceptable to NESC. The primary deficiency in the manpower area, in the Council's view, was the 'weakness of the Department of Labour' and the fact that manpower policy, which was the responsibility of that Department, had come 'to be defined as a collection of agencies and schemes'. The most immediate priority was to strengthen the Department, including the setting-up of a Manpower Research Unit, to enable it to 'change from being passive to being more innovative and accepting responsibility for policy'. While not making a detailed recommendation, it urged more integration and streamlining of the Department's executive agencies, AnCO, the NMS, CERT and the YEA. NESC did not accept the consultants' recommendation that the traditional concept of a manpower policy should be broadened to that of a labour market policy, which would assess how policies in other areas, such as taxation, social security, industrial relations and incomes policy, would impinge on the labour market. It felt that the original concept of a manpower policy should be retained but should include, as one of its objectives, an assessment of the manpower implications of general economic and social policies.

In relation to second level education, and the consultants view that it had not responded sufficiently to labour market requirements, NESC considered that greater flexibility, giving

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wider career options in the general education area, and the development of a higher cycle second level vocational stream, were desirable from a manpower perspective. However, it believed:

these recommendations need to be examined in a much wider educational framework and balanced against all the other influences on the education system. Notwithstanding this ... there is an urgent need for much greater coherence between vocational education and early youth training.(28)

The Council also considered that some of the 'non-skill' type programmes undertaken by AnCO, which had the objective of imparting social skills were more appropriate to the education sector. This, however, would require some radical changes in that system to ensure that those catered for on these special programmes 'are not, in future alienated from the system'. There was a need, also, to review the content and extent of AnCO's external training programme, provided by external contractors, by restricting it to 'training activities which the labour market would not otherwise provide'.

Two priority groups which needed special attention were identified, the long term unemployed and the disadvantaged early school leaver. In the case of these groups, any age limit restrictions on funding either from the Youth Employment Levy or from the European Social Fund, which discriminated against them should be removed. In the case of the school leaver, provision for this group should be organised from within the educational system.

The Report also addressed the role of third level education in the provision of highly skilled manpower, the promotion of in-company training through a variety of state grants, and the levy-grant system. In the case of the latter, while it accepted

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that this had by now achieved most of its original objectives, and was now a very cumbersome system to operate, the Council was not prepared to agree with the consultants' recommendation that it should be discontinued. It suggested instead, that, along with the other state grants to industry, it should form part of a single funding programme which would operate in a much broader context than heretofore.

#### **NESC Report and Apprenticeship:**

The consultants' report was very critical of some aspects of the apprenticeship system stating that:

the view was more than once expressed to us that the system of apprenticeship had reached such a moribund and arthritic state that it would eventually die a slow death, especially in areas where rapid technological change is taking place.(29)

It is difficult to reconcile this view with the developments in apprenticeship which had taken place since the establishment of AnCO in 1967, and with the comments of the Apprenticeship Review Group.(See references 16 and 19 above). It is at variance, also, with comments on the same system, made some years later in the report to the Industrial Policy Review Group (Culliton), Industrial Training in Ireland, which observed that the training of apprentices was very highly regarded here and that the qualified craftsman in Ireland was rated by industry as comparable with his counterpart in Germany (30) which, according to the report, had the most developed vocational training system in Europe. Apprenticeship in Ireland, because of its historical affinity with the British system, was largely perceived as being in the 'ownership' of the craft unions, unlike the German model where 'ownership'

was with the employers. In Ireland, it operated within the ambit of industrial relations, and, for the unions, was more than just the training of skilled workers. It became identified with controls on intake, on the numbers to be trained, on 'who does what', and on the supply and demand, and pay rates of craftsmen. It was perceived by the unions as a means of protecting the interests of their members. Even the educational sector had some reservations with regard to change in the system: teachers in technical colleges saw the education of apprentices as an integral part of their work and were sensitive to the possible effects of any alteration in the existing balance of training and education.

These were the realities of the situation, and implementing change became part of a long drawn out, difficult bargaining process which involved discussion, consultation and, at times, compromise. It required negotiating skills, patience and perseverance. To the extent that changes took a long time to effect, it could be said that the apprenticeship system was inflexible, or 'arthritic', but this was more a result of the complex of interests involved than anything inherent in the system itself. In fact the NESC Report pointed out the necessity for all the interests to adopt a more flexible and long-term approach. As for its being 'moribund', this is not borne out by the statistics. The Tables on page 309 of the NESC Report show that the total number of apprentices in 1983 was 29% higher than in 1973, Table A.8 (i), and that the figures for first-year apprentices was 98.1% higher, Table A.8(ii). In the same period, AnCO Apprenticeship Statistics booklets show that attendances at educational release courses increased from 9,091 to 14,373 (58%) while the numbers of apprentices undergoing first-year off-the-job training rose from 830 to 3226 (289%). Some element of these increases was, however, due to higher levels of sponsorship of first-year apprentices by AnCO.

In relation to new technologies, the 1973 AnCO Discussion Document stated that it was not proposed to extend the existing apprenticeship system to other occupations which had a high skill content and that these could be provided for without extending the statutory system. The advent of the Regional College network made available the technical education and training in the diagnostic skills needed for new technology. These could be better learned in the environment of a technical institution than in the production-oriented atmosphere of the workplace and, in most cases, were not suitable for an apprenticeship approach.

Among the problem areas identified by the NESC consultants were:

some of the apprentice regulations were little more than voluntary guidelines

the increasing proportion of first year apprentices directly sponsored by AnCO

the expense of maintaining redundant apprentices in Training Centres

the delay in introducing a system of certification

the inordinately long time required to implement changes in the system due to the amount of consultation necessary

a tendency to refrain from designating new skill areas

a mismatch between apprentice intake and projected demand



the proposal that employers should financially support apprentices in their first year off-the-job turned out to be a myth in reality.

Some of the comments made in the previous paragraph cover a number of these problem areas. However, in relation to the Rules, it was AnCO policy to endeavour to ensure compliance by voluntary co-operation in preference to using the penal provisions of the Act. It was felt that the latter approach would be counter-productive as far as apprentice recruitment was concerned and that a policy of prosecuting employers, particularly in a recession situation, was not in the best interests of apprenticeship. AnCO sponsorship of first-year apprentices, and the reluctance of employers to support first-year off-the-job courses financially, were inter-connected. AnCO held that it was important to maintain apprentice intake during a recessionary period to ensure adequate numbers of craftsmen when the recession ended. Unfortunately, some employers abused this situation, expecting that, if they did not recruit, AnCO would make up any shortfall. Employers could then recruit apprentices in their second year already trained at the State's expense and so reduce their own expenditure. The costs of unemployed apprentices on programmes in AnCO Training Centres qualified for ESF subvention, it kept the apprenticeships 'alive', provided additional training and facilitated many worthwhile community projects. The alternative was to terminate the apprenticeships and pay unemployment benefit which did not attract ESF funding. The extensive consultations needed was responsible for the delay in introducing a system of testing and certification.

The positive aspects of apprenticeship were identified as the joint system of work experience and programmed education; the need, from the apprentice's point of view, to receive training of an adequate standard in key skills with proper certification

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to ensure recognition; protection of the consumer in respect of work carried out, safety and functional efficiency; the degree of State involvement with the ability to influence intake and so aid forward planning.

Among the recommendations put forward by the consultants were:

the first year of apprenticeship to be run jointly by AnCO and the VECs with the ultimate intention that the first year of apprenticeship could be regarded as one component of the second stage of the Vocational Preparation Programme

the State with ESF aid to be totally responsible for funding the first year of apprenticeship

apprentice allowances to be the same as those paid to other State trainees

a reassessment of future requirements in a comprehensive manner to adjust intake to projected demands

a clearly defined national system of selection based on educational attainment and other relevant criteria

no change envisaged in the basic approach to apprentice training after the first year. Sponsoring employers, who would have to be found, to be responsible for wages and the provision of on-the-job training and appropriate work experience

no valid reason why all apprenticeships should involve a duration of four years, a more flexible approach needed

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all parties involved to adopt a more long term perspective in relation to apprentice training with the ability to reach agreement quickly on relevant issues and so reduce the time required to effect changes.(31)

NESC was generally in favour of the recommendations of the consultants. However, in relation to the State, with ESF aid, funding all first year apprentice training, it was non-committal and observed:

In Germany, at present, there is a gradual introduction in schools of a full-time vocational year following initial education with the aim that it be recognised as the first year of certain apprenticeships and there are also signs of an increased formalisation of the training within enterprises.(32)

It was necessary, in the Council's view, to evaluate the various options for first-year apprentice training in the context of possible future developments in the senior cycle of second level education.

#### **White Paper on Manpower Policy 1986:**

The NESC Report was followed in September, 1986, by the Government White Paper on Manpower Policy, which took on board many of the NESC recommendations. At the press conference to launch the White Paper, the Minister for Labour and the Public Service, Ruairi Quinn, singled out two particular groups for whom special provision would be made in future:(33)

..... young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds who are poorly equipped and qualified for the world of work, and who have begun to experience long-term

unemployment

and

..... the long term unemployed. Many of them are caught in a vicious circle, unable to make a breakthrough back to work simply because they have been unemployed for so long.

In the case of the programme for young people, the Social Guarantee, pioneered by the YEA, was being incorporated in the White Paper, while for the long term unemployed, a Direct Action programme, using existing and new schemes, was to be introduced. The Minister also announced that the major step being proposed in the White Paper was that, in order to provide an integrated service, all the existing manpower agencies would be amalgamated into a single body to be known as the National Manpower Authority. He also indicated that, in the apprenticeship area, the Government had asked AnCO 'to move rapidly from the outdated notion of "time serving" to the more effective criterion in an era of advanced technology of "standards achieved" '.

Referring back to the 1965 White Paper, and its main objective of improving the skills of the workforce to meet the requirements of new industry and to facilitate the transition to an industrial economy, the foreword to the 1986 White Paper indicated that these policies had, generally, been successfully achieved. There had been changes, however, in the economic and social spheres and in the employment situation since 1965, and it was apparent that, in addition to improving the quality of the workforce, there was a need now, to assist those who were unemployed, and, especially, the long term unemployed. This represented a positive extension of manpower policy from the economic into the social sphere.

In the summary of the main Government decisions in the White Paper, the areas which manpower policy would cover, were given as:(34)

transition to working life

training

special labour measures

equality and equity in access to jobs and training.

Primary responsibility for the preparation of young people for working life would rest with the education sector while the manpower agencies would assist those who had left school and needed help in securing employment. The development of consultative mechanisms between manpower, education and industry was envisaged to assess the relevance of training to industrial strategy. AnCO's primary role would be to provide the skills required for the existing and future needs of the economy. The levy/grant system would remain, but it, and other grant mechanisms, would be more effectively targeted, with training in small firms being encouraged. Redundant workers, over 25 years, would be given increased priority and the Youth Traineeship Initiative would be utilised to provide training for young people in first-time employment. As regards management training, an Advisory Committee was to be set up under the Industrial Training Act. A new initiative was that training agencies were to be encouraged to become involved in economic development overseas.

Special labour market measures would include removing the upper age limits for participation in training schemes and the introduction of a Direct Action programme to help the long-term (over 12 months) unemployed. Included in the latter

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programme would be special assistance and advice by the Placement Service, an offer of a place on a manpower scheme if a job were not available, and, in certain cases, the payment of a special allowance so that part-time work, or suitable educational courses, could be undertaken. Placement offices, at local level, would become the focal points for services to the unemployed and would be responsible for the Social Guarantee, the school to work transition programmes, employment schemes and the Direct Action initiative for the long term unemployed. The Placement Service would also provide information, assistance and advice, in the context of the free movement of workers within the EC, and young people who were not adequately prepared would be discouraged from seeking work overseas.

#### **Organisational Changes:**

To give effect to the new policy, a number of important organisational changes had been decided by the Government. The most far-reaching was the decision to amalgamate the four manpower bodies, AnCO, the NMS, the YEA and CERT under a single new agency, the National Manpower Authority. The NESC Report in examining the existing manpower arrangements had this to say:

In operational terms the whole manpower area has become a complex minefield of inter-related and criss-crossing functions without a proper sense of direction and there is now an urgent need for a new mechanism for ensuring real co-ordination. The present position constitutes a most confusing situation for young persons entering the labour market.(35)

NESC did not envisage just an amalgamation, under a new name, of the existing agencies but their abolition and re-organisation within a more coherent and efficient framework,

implying, perhaps, some lack of confidence in the ability of existing manpower bodies to meet the 'depth and multiplicity of problems that we now face in the manpower area'.

In the event, as a result of effective lobbying by the Hotel and Catering Industry, CERT retained its separate existence. The title, National Manpower Authority was also dropped, possibly due to the rather poor image of the National Manpower Service, which surfaced during the Dail debate, and the new body, initially referred to as the National Employment and Training Authority (NETA), eventually emerged as An Foras Aiseanna Saothair (FAS), in the Labour Services Act, 1987. The Department of Labour was to be given an expanded role in policy formulation and in the monitoring of labour market developments. In addition, the existing policy-making functions of the manpower agencies were to be transferred to the Department, and the Minister would have authority to issue statutory instructions on new policy measures to them, thus ensuring effective Departmental control over all significant policy changes and initiatives within them. In line with the recommendation of NESF, the age limitation on funding from the Youth Employment Levy was being removed to ensure greater equity in its distribution, particularly as regards the 25-44 year age group. In addition, and more significantly, all manpower funding, including that from the ESF would be distributed by the Department of Labour. Effective control of funding and policy-making would, in future, be exercised by that Department on behalf of the Government.

#### **Apprenticeship and the White Paper:**

Specifically in relation to apprenticeship, the White Paper asserted that the system was 'costly, inflexible and inefficient', a statement discussed earlier in this Chapter and

one to which a number of the members of the AnCO Council took strong exception. The White Paper stated that the Government had instructed AnCO to revise and modernise the system with the objective of developing one which:

is based on standards achieved rather than time served

ensures a satisfactory balance between supply of and demand for apprentices

reduces the financial cost to the State while maintaining quality.(36)

As has already been outlined, this review was still at the consultation stage and had not been completed when AnCO was dissolved in December, 1987.

#### **The Labour Services Act 1987:**

The Bill, from which this Act derived, was introduced to Dail Eireann by the Minister for Labour, Ruairi Quinn, as the National Employment and Training Authority Bill on the 12th. November, 1986. This Bill died with the Coalition Government in 1987, but was re-introduced in June of that year by Mr. Bertie Ahern, the Fianna Fail Minister for Labour. Its title had been changed to the Labour Services Bill, 1987, and the proposal to include CERT in the new authority had been removed. The resulting Labour Services Act, 1987,(37) passed by the Oireachtas in June, was to give effect to the organisational changes announced by the Government in the White Paper on Manpower Policy. The main purpose of the Act was to provide for the establishment of a new body, An Foras Aiseanna Saothair (FAS), which would make provision for:



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training and retraining for employment

work experience in employment

the establishment and management of employment schemes

job placement services, involving career guidance, information, and advice on employment, not only in Ireland, but also in EC member states

assistance to communities and co-operatives in the provision of employment

research, and the collection, publication and distribution of relevant information relating to its own activities.

However, in addition, the Act provided that FAS 'shall also have and enjoy all those functions that were vested in An Chomhairle, the Agency and the Manpower Service immediately before the establishment day...' The Act, as the NESC Report had proposed, provided for the dissolution of AnCO (An Chomhairle) and the YEA (the Agency) and the winding up of the Manpower Service. (Although the NETA Bill provided for the inclusion of CERT in the new Authority, it had been decided, before the Labour Services Act was passed, that it should remain an independent body). Part 2. of the Industrial Training Act and its First Schedule, both dealing with the composition, functions, duties etc., of An Chomhairle Oiliuma and its Council, were repealed, but the remainder of the Act, including Chapter 3 - Apprenticeship, remained in force. So did any rules, regulations and orders which were in operation, and any committees which had been established continued in existence. As far as apprenticeship was concerned, this meant that the Apprenticeship Rules, made under the 1959 Apprenticeship Act, and continued in force and in some cases amended, under the

1967 Industrial Training Act, remained valid under the 1987 Labour Services Act. Sections 2 to 14 of the YEA Act were also repealed, but the remaining Sections, dealing mainly with the imposition and collection of the levy, were retained. The levy, however, was renamed the Employment and Training Levy and could be expended, at the discretion of the Minister, for the training and employment of persons of any age, instead of those under 25 only as specified heretofore.

The Act also provided for the setting up by FAS of a subsidiary company, the articles of association of which required approval by the Ministers for Labour and Finance, for the purpose of undertaking the provision of consultancy and manpower related services overseas on a commercial basis. This company, International Labour Training Services Ltd, (ILTS) was established with its own Board and Director in 1988.

#### **The Board of FAS:**

The composition of the Board of FAS was to reflect its broadened scope in the social sphere, particularly in relation to the long-term unemployed and the emphasis on disadvantaged early school-leavers. It consisted of a part-time Chairman and sixteen ordinary members appointed by the Minister. There were four trade union members, only one of whom represented a craft union, and four employer members; a reduction of one each on the old AnCO Council. One member each, (appointed in consultation with the relevant Ministers and appropriate organisations), represented social welfare and youth interests. There was a representative of the Minister for Finance and two members nominated by the Minister for Labour. The staff of FAS, in keeping with current trends, could elect two members to the Board. From the apprenticeship point of view, the composition of the Board represented a significant reduction in the

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representation of the craft unions compared with what they had in An Cheard Chomhairle and in AnCO, signifying a reduction in the emphasis likely to be placed on apprenticeship in the future operations of FAS.

#### **Policy and Control:**

The Act provided for a very high degree of control by the Minister of the activities of the new authority. Not only was he empowered to issue directives in relation to policy, or any of its activities or expenditure, with which FAS must comply, but Sections 12 (3) and (4) imposed limitations which were the very antithesis of the rationale of the establishment of semi-state bodies in the first instance and which could only have an adverse effect on initiative and innovation. For example, not less than three months before the end of each financial year, FAS was required to furnish a report, in writing, to the Minister outlining its proposed activities for the coming financial year. This report was to include the commencement and termination dates of all programmes and projects, and estimates of its expenditure on each of these in the preceding year. However, it could not undertake any of these until they had been approved by the Minister. Furthermore, Section 12 (4) provided that neither FAS, nor its subsidiary, ILTS, 'shall, during any financial year' :

(a) in carrying on the activities specified in the report in that year approved by the Minister and the Minister for Finance depart from the outline thereof in the report,

(b) carry on any activity (other than a day to day activity) not specified in the report, or

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(c) incur expenditure in relation to any activity, project or programme in excess of the estimate of that expenditure given in the report,

without the prior approval of the Minister and the Minister for Finance.(38)

Again, these controls had their origins in the NESC Report and its recommendation to strengthen the policy-making and control functions of the Department of Labour. It was pointed out that the 1967 Industrial Training Act gave 'AnCO more or less uninhibited powers in regard to the provision of training' and that Act gave no authority to the Minister or the Department to issue policy directives or control its operations (other than by curtailing Exchequer funding). Some of AnCO's training activities had been seen as intruding into the educational sphere giving rise to charges of wasteful duplication and this was to be ended. The Youth Employment Agency had a role in policy-making in the area of youth employment, and in the allocation of the proceeds of the levy, a function which had been largely eroded. With the transfer of policy-making to the Department and the changing of the Youth Employment Levy to a broader Employment Levy, the existence or future role of the Agency had to be questioned. A decision was taken, therefore, to absorb it into the new manpower body. It was felt that the National Manpower Service, which up to now had been part of the Department of Labour and subject to civil service restrictions, would have more freedom of action to perform its functions if it were separated from the Department and became part of a semi-State body. The expected result of all this was that, in the manpower area, the Department of Labour would be responsible for overall policy and control while its executive agencies, restructured under the control of a semi-State organisation, FAS, would be responsible for the policy implementation. The effectiveness of the Department of Labour

in policy formulation will be the crucial factor in the success of these new structures.

**The Dail Debate:**

The contributions by the deputies who took part in the Dail Debates on the NETA Bill give an indication of their attitudes to the various agencies involved in the manpower area. Provided CERT was excluded from the new body and retained its separate identity, all were in favour of amalgamation. CERT was perceived as a well managed, tightly controlled organisation whose operations were accurately focused within its own particular niche in the market place and with a 100% placement record. It was integrating effectively, and not in competition with, the educational sector. The Minister's main concern seemed to be the low contribution (£50,000) of the Hotel, Catering and Tourism Industry to its overall service budget of approximately £6m. By merging it with AnCO and setting up an Industrial Training Committee, with the power to introduce a levy/grant scheme, it could be hoped that this position would be improved. It was apparent that if CERT was to be included in the new body, there would be a lot of opposition to the Bill, especially from the main opposition party, Fianna Fail.

It was obvious that the Deputies' main concern was with the unemployment situation. AnCO, the Youth Employment Agency and the National Manpower Service came in for a lot of criticism, most of it undeserved. The YEA had failed to create jobs, although it was agreed that it had been given an impossible task anyway, AnCO had trained people and could not get jobs for its trainees and apprentices and the NMS could not find jobs for its many applicants. So much emphasis was placed on the provision of jobs by the Deputies, that it could have been the reason why the name of the new body was changed from the

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National Employment and Training Authority to An Foras Aiseanna Saothair, which did not emphasise the provision of employment. AnCO was criticised in relation to the relevance of some of its training programmes. With regard to training for people from disadvantaged areas such as the docklands, Bertie Ahern, opposition spokesman on Labour said:

It is not appropriate to bring such people for training to a room in a fancy building with word processors. The courses must be relevant to the people and available in their own areas. To take people from Sheriff St. to Loughlinstown is like taking them on holidays and in those circumstances they cannot be expected to apply themselves.(39)

The need for more regionalisation of AnCO's activities was stressed and Deputy Ivan Yates was very critical of its Head Office expenditure, stating:

The facts are disturbing because my investigation reveals that within a half square mile of Baggot Street Bridge, 800 people are involved in the deployment of one type of manpower service or another. Each of those people takes up approximately 300 square feet in an office which costs about £10 per square foot. That means that approximately £2 million is tied up in expenditure of that sort. .... These offices are lavishly carpeted and a fortune is spent on daily and other newspapers.(40)

In relation to the training of apprentices, Deputy Pierse Wyse was critical of the fact that large numbers of apprentices who had completed courses could not get employment to complete their training and were being referred to as 'half baked apprentices'. Deputy T. Mac Giolla stated that the 'role of the National Manpower Service was unbelievably bad' and it

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was a 'grave mistake to set up AnCO and it was also a waste of funds', mainly because, he maintained, they duplicated facilities already available within the VEC system. On the other hand, Deputy Gene Fitzgerald considered that 'AnCO provides a wonderful success story' and high profile projects, such as the restoration of the Irish College in Louvain, received a lot of praise. It appeared, too, that the operations of AnCO at local level were generally held in very high regard. Deputy J. O' Leary from Kerry commented, in relation to the AnCO Training Centre in Tralee:

This Kerry training centre has always been in close contact with the industries surrounding it so that it knows their training problems, their needs, the challenges they have to meet and their opportunities. ... AnCO's response to the community is never inflexible and their dealings with industry are never routine.

In relation to the Community Youth Training Programme, Deputy O'Leary said:

The community youth training programme has been of tremendous assistance to AnCO. Through this scheme AnCO give unemployed young people, redundant apprentices and craftsmen an opportunity to acquire new skills and continue their training on projects which are of benefit to the community.(41)

The main problem, of course, was that the continuing recession affected the employment situation, and State bodies, established to train and place people in employment, could not operate effectively in the roles for which they were set up, precisely because the jobs were not there. As the only state-funded manpower agencies in being, the expectations of them, in the economic environment which existed, were unrealistic. Like

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their many clients, they too, were victims of the recession, a recession of international dimensions which the Government was, to a large extent, powerless to influence.

#### **Review of Apprenticeship under FAS:**

When FAS was established on 1st. January, 1988, there were 12,943 registered apprentices in 48 occupations in the seven designated trade groups, with 2,955 in their first year. Attendance at educational release courses for 1986/87 had totalled 8,585, of which 4,155 or 48% had attended day release and 4,430 or 52% block release classes. Of the 2,955 first year apprentices, 1,153 or 39% were undergoing off-the-job training and the remainder, 1,802 or 61%, were being trained in the traditional manner on-the-job, - a significant fall-back in off-the-job training from the peak of 3226 or 88.8% in 1983. The new National Craft Certificate had been introduced in 1986. In 1987, 293 of these Certificates were issued and a further 533 in 1988. The Apprenticeship Rules and Regulations, made under the Cheard Chomhairle Act of 1959, some of which had been amended under the Industrial Training Act, 1967, continued in force. The second Review of Apprenticeship, begun in 1984 and given an additional impetus by the Government directive, in 1986, in advance of the White Paper on Manpower Policy, was still at the consultation stage and had not been completed when AnCO was dissolved in December, 1987.

In May, 1988, Mr. Bertie Ahern, now Minister for Labour, directed FAS to review the apprenticeship system as a priority. The Board of FAS established a high level Apprenticeship Review Group with twelve members, five from the Board and seven FAS staff, which was chaired by one of the Board members, Mr. Kevin Duffy, an ICTU nominee. The other Board members on the Review Group represented employer, educational, Department of Labour



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and youth interests. The Terms of Reference given to this Group were:

1. To review the current arrangements governing the apprenticeship system.
2. To develop proposals for a new apprenticeship which would make the system more efficient and flexible and which would ensure that the future apprenticeship needs of industry are met. In this regard the Working Group will consider:
  - (i) the possibility of a system based on standards achieved.
  - (ii) how the proposed arrangements will be financed and how best any Exchequer costs involved might be minimised.
3. To identify the financial and other implications of the proposals.(42)

In a wide-ranging report of over 80 pages, completed in mid-1989, the Review Group covered such topics as the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system, the need for change, the likely impact of the Single European Market and an analysis of apprenticeships in other countries. It also undertook a number of costing exercises. It set out the format of a proposed new apprenticeship system, a framework for the implementation of its proposals, the cost implications, suggestions for funding and the benefits to be expected from the changes proposed. The Report made fourteen major recommendations, some of them quite radical. They included:(43)

A standards based apprenticeship system and a modular approach to training (see diagram, page 525). While this would be delivered over a flexible time period, recognition as a craftsman by employers, trade unions and the State would be conditional on the passing of compulsory tests and examinations leading to the award of the National Craft Certificate.

A minimum age for entry of sixteen years.

Seven types of delivery mechanisms, to include Social Guarantee entrants, Levels 1 and 2, Specialist Modules, Supplementary Theory Classes (for in-house test failures), Preparatory Classes for Women entrants, Supplementary Training (for apprentices who fail achievement tests), Language Training and the provision of Testing Facilities.

Use of a single resource for apprenticeship training, to eliminate duplication of FAS and VEC facilities, training and education classes to be in the same location.

A broad spread of courses to be available in a wide variety of locations to meet local labour market needs, with specialist courses provided on a national basis. Courses to rotate annually or on a part yearly basis.

The National Craft Certificate to have international recognition to provide for mobility, testing facilities to be rationalised between FAS and the Department of Education. Curricula and tests designed to qualify for City and Guilds recognition.

Language courses to be available to apprentices.

A fund to be provided by a levy on employers to finance apprenticeship. Employers would recover wages paid to apprentices during off-the-job training from this fund.

A National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee of eight persons to be set up to advise the Board of FAS. Regional Committees of the social partners would administer all aspects of off-the-job training.

Gross savings of £12m. per annum should accrue, most of it to the Exchequer.

The concept of apprenticeship should be broadened to include all non-designated trades and training and funding made available to all forms of apprenticeship.

Ladder to higher levels for apprentices to be provided.

It was expected that further cost savings to the State would accrue should the proposed levy on employers attract pro-rata ESF subvention, and by the payment of training allowances, instead of the higher wage rates, to apprentices during all periods of off-the-job training. Special provision would be made for groups such as Social Guarantee applicants and women entrants, for each of which 10% of the available apprenticeships would be reserved, and for mature persons. Revised, higher, educational entry qualifications were proposed with special subjects and specific grades in respect of particular trades.

In reading the Report it is evident that many details need clarification and that putting the proposed new system in place, and keeping it operational, will pose considerable administrative problems. This is particularly so when it is stated, in relation to the Development of Skills Modules to be

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undertaken within industry, 'It is not envisaged that FAS will undertake a detailed monitoring system ....'. One of the major difficulties encountered in Ireland in the training of apprentices on-the-job has always been the attitude of many employers, particularly small employers, with whom, of necessity, production usually takes precedence over training, unlike the situation in Germany where one of the duties of the Meister was the training of his apprentices. In Germany, rules and regulations are seen as having to be obeyed; in Ireland, they are sometimes seen as an obstacle, to be got round if possible. The recommendation with regard to the proposed new levy was to prove controversial and the linkage of the National Craft Certificate to the British based City and Guilds system of certification met with some high-level disapproval.

#### **FAS Discussion Document - Apprenticeship: A New Approach:**

The Report of this Review Group led to the publication by FAS, in December 1989, of the second discussion document on apprenticeship, again entitled Apprenticeship - A New Approach. In the Foreword, the Minister for Labour, Mr. Bertie Ahern, referred to the impending unified internal market of the European Community. This, he said, would introduce a period of profound change, demanding, among other things, the need for new training initiatives, if Ireland was to gain an enhanced share, not only of European, but also of world markets. In relation to apprenticeship he stated:

The achievement of such aims will depend significantly on the quality of our workforce and one of the cornerstones on which that workforce must ultimately rest is our apprenticeship system.(44)

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Like the first Discussion Document, this one was to emphasise that the proposals it contained did not represent decisions of the Board of FAS and that decisions on a revised apprenticeship would be made only after all the responses to the Document had been considered. Three main areas where changes were needed were identified, as follows:

Government concerns as expressed in the 1986 White Paper, that the existing system was 'costly, inflexible and inefficient', that there was need for one based on standards achieved rather than on time served, one which would ensure a satisfactory balance between supply and demand and reduce State costs while maintaining quality.

Weaknesses in the existing system, such as the absence of compulsory competency based standards, rigidities which inhibited adequate provision for new technologies, and inequities at entry which, in some cases, prevented the best candidates from getting apprenticeships, coupled with the fact that many apprentices were still being recruited directly by employers and were not getting off-the-job training.

Alignment with European norms, such as competency based standards, mutual recognition of qualifications to facilitate labour mobility within the EC and more 'ownership' of the system by employers, as in Europe.(45)

#### **A Competency Based Standards System of Apprenticeship:**

To arrive at a competency based standards system, a six stage modular approach, consisting of periods of off-the-job training and development on-the-job, (to include in-company training and work experience), as set out in figure 7, page 525, was

proposed. As indicated, there would be in-house tests at the end of each period of off-the-job training and a 'progression of competency tests, the passing of which would culminate in the award of the National Craft Certificate'. Each test would have to be passed before the apprentice could take the next one and, what was a radical proposal, 'full craft status would not be afforded to any individual by employers or trade unions in the future unless he/she had been awarded the National Craft Certificate'.(46) An industry-based assessment system would be developed, with the apprentice completing a range of core projects, which would be checked by a craft supervisor. Assessment of practical skills and related theoretical knowledge would form the main elements of the testing procedures. The standards to be achieved for the award of the National Craft Certificate would be determined by agreement between employers, trade unions, the Department of Education and FAS. It was anticipated that the administration of the competency tests would require 'investment in terms of space, facilities and personnel' and that further consideration of how the testing system would be funded was needed with the possibility of the payment of a fee to undergo a test being suggested.

As regards the duration of apprenticeship, the document stated:

The length of time taken to attain the required competencies will determine the length of apprenticeship. This is expected to vary by trade and by the individual's performance. To determine the duration of each module:

- (i) competency standards will have to be agreed with the social partners;
- (ii) the curricula for each trade will have to be reviewed in the light of these standards.(47)

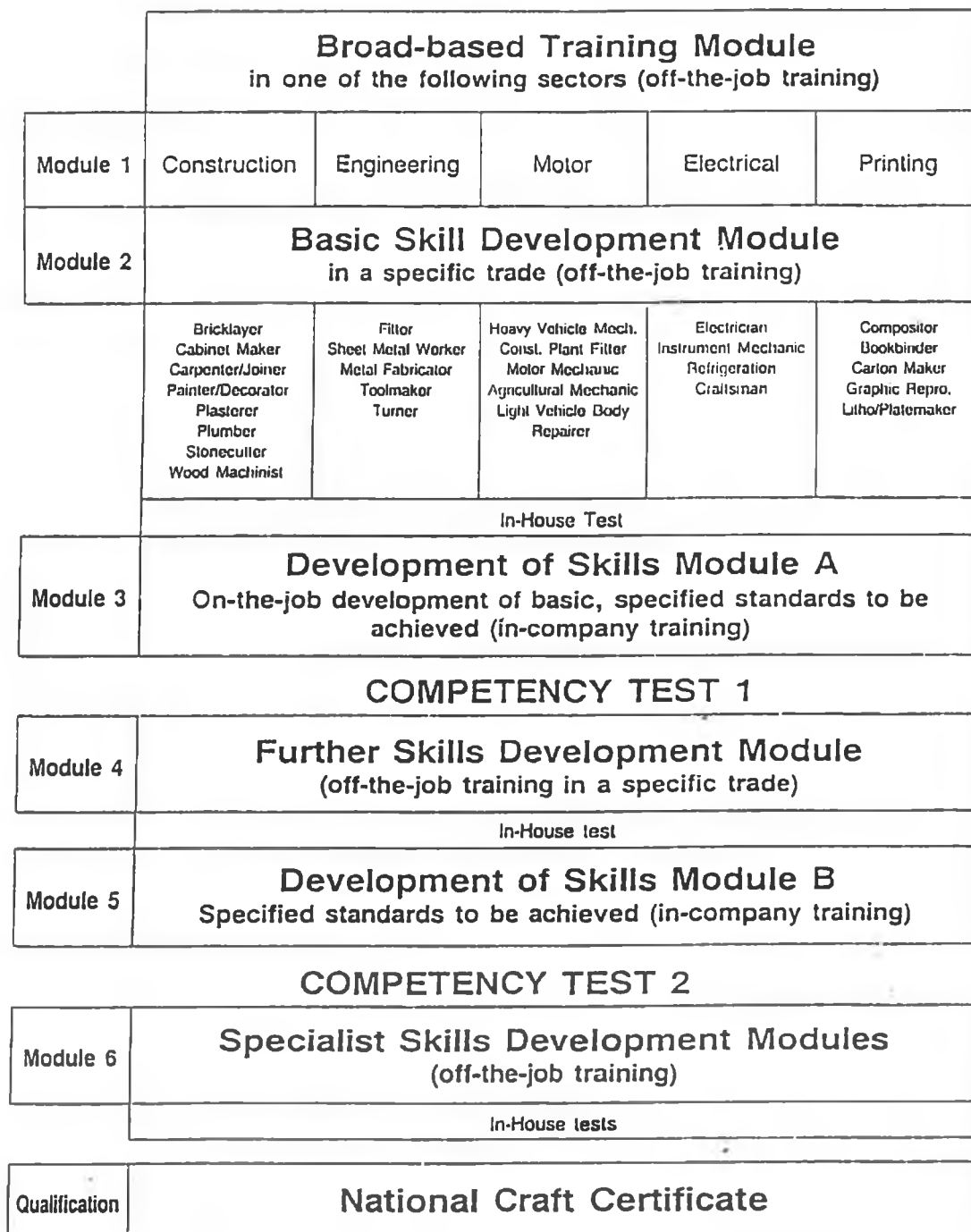
An interesting proposal was that Module 1 would consist of broad-based instruction in the relevant trade group, before training specific to the particular trade was undertaken in Module 2, thus building in some elements of flexibility and 'cross-skilling', at least within the trade group, from the start. This aspect would be further amplified in Module 6, the Specialist Skill Development Module, where apprentices would undertake 'two or three modules which will not be restricted to their specific trade', one of which could be a pre-technician module. Existing curricula would have to be updated and continuously reviewed, with consideration being given to providing basic training in European languages.

#### **Entry and Recruitment Procedures:**

The proposal that the minimum age of entry to apprenticeship should be raised from fifteen to sixteen years was a new departure. The use of aptitude testing, as an aid to recruitment, would be retained as would the need for colour vision tests for particular trades. The proposed minimum educational entry qualifications indicated a reversion from the more liberal position adopted under the AnCO system, which required three Grade Ds in the Group or Intermediate Certificate, to a more demanding level of qualification viz three Grade Cs plus two Grade Ds, with a technical subject being desirable. In the case of some trades, higher minimum qualifications might be necessary depending on curricular requirements. There was no reference to provision for exemptions except in the case of special groups, such as Social Guarantee entrants, disabled persons, women and mature apprentices. Pre-apprenticeship modules would be provided for

DIAGRAMMATIC LAYOUT

— Proposed New Apprenticeship Model —



Source - 'Apprenticeship, A New Approach' - Discussion Document. December 1989

Figure 7



Social Guarantee entrants and for women applicants, and for each of these groups, 10% of apprenticeship places would be available. Disabled applicants could be facilitated through the provision of an approved preparatory course conducted by the Rehabilitation Institute, while mature applicants would require three years relevant work experience. Two recruitment options were proposed, initial screening by FAS using aptitude tests to provide a pool of qualified applicants from which employers would recruit, or alternatively, employers would interview their own applicants, who were over sixteen years and were educationally qualified, and these would then be aptitude tested by FAS prior to being offered an apprenticeship.

**A National Apprenticeship Committee:**

As recommended by the Apprenticeship Review Group in its Report, a National Apprenticeship Committee to advise the Board of FAS was proposed. Its primary responsibility would be to supervise the change-over from a time-served system of apprenticeship to one that was standards-based. In addition, the drafting of recruitment guidelines, the provision of national curricula and the development of policies to cater for the special groups would form part of its remit, initially. The Committee would have eight members, drawn from employer, trade union, education and FAS interests.

**The Provision of Training:**

It was calculated that if the proposed new model were adopted up to 3,500 off-the-job training places would be available nationally, using FAS and Department of Education facilities and the small number existing within industry. It was anticipated that there could be significant cost savings if

apprentices could undergo all their off-the-job training modules in the one location, instead of the current arrangement where training took place in a training centre and the educational element in a vocational college. In this connection, the Discussion Document stated:

The use of a dual set of resources (FAS and the Department of Education) for one apprentice place results in considerable duplication and inefficiency. Therefore, it is proposed that all off-the-job training for each module undertaken by an apprentice is delivered in the same location.(48)

To implement the training and testing elements of the proposed new model, there would be a need to develop facilities, nationally, for the nine activities already identified by the Apprenticeship Review Group. These, as already indicated, were:

- Off-the-job Modules 1, 2 and 3.
- Specialist Modules.
- Systematic on-the-job training.
- Supplementary classes for those who fail in-house tests.
- Supplementary training for apprentices who fail competency tests.
- Social Guarantee Module.
- Preparatory courses for women apprentices.
- Language training.
- Testing facilities for competency tests.

The Document also referred to the possibility of extending the apprenticeship concept to include trades or occupations not currently designated.

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**Costs and Funding:**

In initiating the review of apprenticeship in its White Paper on Manpower Policy, 1986, the Government required that the financial cost to the State be reduced. In addition, the Discussion Document proposed that there should be a reduction in direct costs to employers, coupled with a higher degree of 'ownership' by industry of apprenticeship. It also planned to eliminate some abuses of the sponsorship system that had developed, especially the non-payment of wages to apprentices while on courses, and also the sponsorship of apprentices by their parents. The total cost of apprenticeship, in 1987, was estimated at £54m., (although Table 1, column 2, of Appendix 1 on page 18 gives a figure of £65m for the same year, which includes an ESF subvention of £11.9m.), of which employers contributed around £34m. Apart from this discrepancy, the costing figures are also difficult to interpret in relation to apprentice numbers. There were some 13,000 registered apprentices at the end of 1986 and the 1987 intake was given as 2,500. What is unclear is the relationship of the total cost to these apprentice figures. The costs of the proposed new system were calculated at between £44.2m. and £52.1m. but this did not include the expenses of testing, for which no estimate was given. Six alternative funding options were proposed, five of which were based on a payroll levy. Employers would contribute, through this levy, to a fund from which apprentices' wages and other apprenticeship costs, normally met directly by employers, would be paid. As before, the total expenditure on off-the-job training, other than wages, would be met by FAS or by the Department of Education, depending on where the training was delivered. It was anticipated that ESF subvention in the region of 64% to 65% would be available to cover the wages element and other training costs while the apprentices were on off-the-job training/education. In the case of Option 6, which did not provide for a payroll levy, and

where consequently there would be no apprenticeship fund, employers would, as heretofore, be directly responsible for the payment of wages. In the case of this option, however, ESF subvention would not be available to supplement wage costs during off-the-job periods.

Two levy bases were suggested, one consisted of the total industrial workforce of 300,000 and the other of the workforce in the Construction and Engineering sectors, estimated at 125,000. In the first case, the amount of the levy would range from 0.93% to 0.43% of payroll, depending on the option selected, while in the second case, it would range from 2.24% to 1.04%. The levy options themselves varied, depending on whether the apprenticeship fund would pay all wage costs during the total apprenticeship period, or the wages during the off-the-job elements only, or, pay a reduced training allowance instead of wages during the full apprenticeship period, or a training allowance during off-the-job training and the wage rate for the balance of the apprenticeship. Total costs could be reduced from £65m. to £44.2m if Option 4, which provided for the payment of a training allowance instead of wages during the full apprenticeship period, were selected. On the other hand, if Option 1, (an employer levy of 0.93% or 2.24%, depending on the levy base to fund apprentice wages), or Option 6, (no levy, but employers paying wages directly), were selected, the costs to the Exchequer would fall from £19.1m.(in 1987) to £6.6m., giving a maximum saving of £12.5m.(49) The Discussion Document was, however, careful to hedge its bets on its costing options pending final decisions on the availability of the Structural Funds.

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The advantages of the proposed system over the existing arrangements were summarised as follows:(50)

more efficient provision and utilisation of training places

new funding options, which would spread the cost of apprenticeship training more equitably

a guarantee for apprentices of full employment while undergoing training

more 'ownership' by employers

reduction in the total cost of apprenticeship.

The Discussion Document requested written submissions by 31st March, 1990, while the Minister, in his foreword, hoped that the new system would be in operation in time for the 1990 apprentice intake. In the event, this was to prove an over-optimistic expectation.

#### **Report on the Discussion:**

Over 12,000 copies of the Discussion Document were circulated, somewhat less than in 1973, but no promotional meetings were organised to initiate a public debate. In all, over eighty written submissions were received and forty-six meetings were held with interested bodies to clarify the proposals in the Document. A Report (51) was submitted to the FAS Directorate on 22nd. February, 1990, in which the major points raised in the discussion were summarised. There was fairly general agreement on the need for change, particularly in regard to a compulsory requirement for certification for craft status, although there

were concerns about the implications of such a requirement. The existing National Craft Certificate was considered to be a standards based system, all that was needed was to make it compulsory. There was concern about the decrease in apprentice numbers, from 22,000 in 1982 to 12,000 in 1988. In relation to the impact on apprenticeship of technician courses in the Regional Colleges and the Colleges of Technology, the Report commented:

The view has been expressed that many employers find the employment of people with technician qualifications to be more effective and less problematic particularly in the engineering/electrical crafts.(52)

There was agreement that the existing system could be more cost effective, especially in relation to the overlap between FAS and VEC release facilities for the training and education of apprentices. However, the practicalities, and in particular, the potential industrial relations aspects for FAS, of implementing such a rationalisation was referred to in the Report. There was a general feeling that the question of the duration of apprenticeship had not been openly and frankly addressed in the Discussion Document. Calculations based on the costing estimates in the Document had led many to assume that the maximum apprenticeship period under the new model would be 2½ years. There was a perception that a decision on this had, in any case, already been taken, judging from reported statements emanating from high level sources within FAS and the Department of Labour. Such a reduction would have serious implications for the educational sector, and it was apparent that the total elimination of the apprenticeship period was not acceptable. The Report concluded that a standards achieved system, coupled with a minimum time requirement, was the outcome most likely to be agreed. In relation to the proposed modular system, some employer representatives considered that

Module 6, Specialist Skills, was not required and some trade unionists felt that it might be used to introduce 'multi-skilling' without agreement. On the other hand, a submission from Aer Lingus gave details of a successful 'multi-skilling' arrangement it had introduced by agreement, whereby eleven trade denominations had been reduced to two, Mechanical and Avionics. An effective system to monitor the on-the-job training of apprentices was considered essential in many of the submissions made, particularly those of trade unionists. Any attempt to eliminate the educational sector from the apprenticeship system, or reduce its influence, would be strongly resisted.

While the Department of Education, in its submission, welcomed the introduction of higher educational entry qualifications, it was opposed to increasing the age of entry to sixteen years. In this connection, ICTU saw a contradiction in the proposals that the age of entry should be sixteen years, while the proposed educational entry qualifications would, normally, have been achieved by school-leavers at the age of fifteen years, and it 'would not support the proposal that prospective apprentices should have one year of relevant work experience before entry into the system'. The Construction Industry Federation, favoured the retention of the fifteen year entry age and the existing minimum educational requirements of 3 Grade Ds at Intermediate or Group Certificate level.

There was a general welcome for the establishment of a National Apprenticeship Committee and suggestions that it should be set up at once to consider all submissions made and to agree the format of a revised system. However, judging from the number of organisations wishing to be represented on it, it was likely to have considerably more members than the eight suggested in the Discussion Document.

Apart from the trade unions, there was no great enthusiasm for the introduction of a payroll levy. In fact, the Federation of Irish Employers was emphatically opposed to its introduction and considered that it would have a negative effect, prompting many employers to opt out of apprenticeship training altogether. Employers took issue with some of the costings outlined in the Discussion Document, particularly as they related to the funding of apprentice wages in certain circumstances. In fact, the Report referred to the possibility of a joint proposal from the Construction Industry Federation and Confederation of Irish Industry on an alternative funding arrangement. The introduction of a training allowance, instead of apprentice wage rates based on the full craft rate, and which could result in considerable cost savings, would appeal to employers but would not be acceptable to trade unions.

Finally, the Report recommended three options to the Board of FAS:

Make decisions having considered all the views available.

Enter into further discussions with the major representative bodies.

Agree general guidelines and establish the National Apprenticeship Committee as a vehicle for evolving (sic) implementation of a new system. (53)

#### **Decisions of the Board of FAS:**

The Board of FAS considered the submissions and the Report on the Discussion at meetings in May and June, 1990, and a sub-committee was set up to study the position in detail, in particular, those areas where agreement was lacking. This sub-



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committee submitted its recommendations to the Board in July, 1990, and, following detailed consideration of all the issues involved, the Board finalised its position on the format of a revised apprenticeship and submitted its recommendations to the Minister for Labour on 27th. July, 1990.(54) The Document setting out the Decisions of the Board of FAS is in three parts:

Decisions of the Board of FAS for a New Apprenticeship System;

Estimated Costings for Proposed Payroll Levy;

Cost Effect/Benefits of Proposed System;

The new system would be a single, standards-based one to come into effect on a date specified by the Board of FAS, after which attainment of the National Craft Certificate would be a compulsory requirement for recognition as a craft worker. The minimum age of entry was raised to sixteen years and the minimum educational qualifications were raised from three Grade Ds to five, including a technical subject, in the Intermediate/Junior Certificate, along with evidence of aptitude for the particular trade. In addition, a colour vision test was needed for the Printing, Painting and Decorating and Electrical Trades. Industry-sponsored apprentices would be recruited by Industry in co-operation with FAS, while State and semi-State bodies would be encouraged to select apprentices from a common pool. Provision was made for recruitment from special groups such as Social Guarantee trainees, adults, the disabled and women.

The Training Model would be modular with alternating periods of on and off-the-job training, the period of each, and the total duration of apprenticeship to be determined by the

developmental requirements of each trade. Standards would be assessed by two competency tests during apprenticeship with the Department of Education, FAS, employers and trade unions being involved in the setting and assessment of standards. They would be compatible with European standards and would be formally reviewed every five years. There was provision for advancement to technician level. Off-the-job training would be delivered using either FAS or Department of Education facilities, except where approved industry-based facilities existed. However, each off-the-job module had to be delivered by a single institution. This meant that apprentices would do their formal training and education either in a Training Centre or in an educational establishment, but not in a combination of both as before.

Radical changes were made in relation to funding aimed at more equitable recruitment, the prevention of abuses and increasing the number of apprenticeships. As before, the State would be responsible for off-the-job delivery costs. Apprentices would now be paid a training allowance, instead of a wage. This would be funded, during the off-the-job modules, by a levy of 0.5% of employees' payroll on employers in the private and commercial semi-State sectors, estimated to provide an annual income of £35m. Actual payments to apprentices would be made by employers but levy-paying employers could recoup 100% of payments made during off-the-job modules from the levy fund, while training allowances paid while on-the-job would be the employers' responsibility. The levy fund would also provide for specified grants to levy-paying employers for eligible first-time entrants to employment in non-apprenticeship occupations in respect of training programmes approved by FAS. The levy fund would also provide £2m. to FAS as a contribution to the cost of providing a training advisory service (including apprenticeship) to industry. Finally, the existing Levy-Grant schemes would be abolished.

The consultative mechanism was to be at two levels: a sub-committee of the Board of FAS, with the power to co-opt non-voting experts to determine issues such as entry requirements, delivery, standards and duration, which would monitor and review the new system; and secondly, an Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, chaired by a FAS Board member, of eighteen members and representative of ICTU, Employer bodies, the National Youth Council, the FAS Board, the FAS Executive and the Department of Education, to include the IVEA. This Committee would advise the Board of FAS, through its sub-Committee on Apprenticeship on the introduction of the new system.

In the section dealing with the estimated costings for the proposed payroll levy, the document and its appendices sets out in detail the basis on which the anticipated income of £35m is calculated. It discusses a number of options based on the grants payable in respect of an annual intake of 3,500 designated apprentices and a further 40,000 first-time entrants to employment. In the case of apprentices, the maximum grants would range from £1,200 to £2,400, depending on the option selected, while in the case of the other occupations, they would total between £764 and £932, again depending on the option selected. Special arrangements would be needed for the funding of CERT courses, and the calculations were based on the assumption that there would be no significant number of unemployed apprentices. With the abolition of the existing levy-grant schemes, FAS staff would be available to administer the new scheme.

In analysing costs and benefits, in relation to apprenticeship, the document indicates that, under the existing system, the cost of training 2,500 apprentices was £31m., whereas under the new system, the costs for 3,500 apprentices would be £26,8m. The benefits to the State would include reduced costs arising from the payment of FAS sponsored apprentices from the new

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levy, and increased efficiency resulting from a reduction of total off-the-job training times from sixty to a maximum of forty weeks and from the implementation of the 'single institution' principle. There would be some increases in State expenditure resulting from increases in the numbers of apprentices. Employers would benefit from the abolition of the existing levy, from a reduction in wage costs through the introduction of lower training allowances, from off-the-job allowances being paid from a central fund and from an increased number of apprentices. The document did add a rider to the effect that the implications of the proposals on ESF funding could not be determined until an approved scheme was submitted to the EC.(55)

In an article on the 25th. January, 1991, entitled, Row Holds up Funding for New Apprentice Scheme, John Walshe, the then Education Correspondent of The Irish Times, assesses the position as follows:

The final agreed proposals spelt out plans for a new apprenticeship system but failed to specify how it should be funded.

So far, the payroll levy has not proved acceptable and overdue reform has been held up.

#### **Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) 1991:**

In late 1990 and early 1991, the proposed new apprenticeship system was referred by the Minister for Labour for consideration by the Social Partners in the discussions leading to the formulation of the 1991 Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP).(56) This Programme, which was accepted

by the Government and the Social Partners, outlined the format of a new apprenticeship system as follows:

115. A new standards based apprenticeship system should be introduced. The aim should be to increase the number of apprentices (2,500) in the currently designated trades by 1,000 per year. In addition, further trades should be designated which would increase the numbers still further.

116. To be recognised as a craft worker in future a person would have to have the National Craft Certificate as a compulsory requirement.

117. Minimum entry requirements would be specified and responsibility for the recruitment of industry sponsored apprentices would rest with industry in co-operation with FAS.

118. Special provision would be made for groups such as the disadvantaged, the disabled, mature entrants and women.

119. FAS would set annual achievable recruitment targets with the objective of increasing the number of apprentices from special groups.

120. The new system would be modular with alternating periods of on and off-the-job training.

121. The duration of apprenticeship would be determined by the training/education/development requirements of each trade.

122. Advisory Committees, representative of ICTU, FIE and CIF should be established to oversee the implementation of these proposals.

125. All training allowances will be reviewed.

126. The funding to allow for the new apprenticeship system, and the other initial and continuing training, will be discussed by the Government with the trade union and employer organisations in the Central Review Committee (CRC) of this Programme.(57)

It should be noted that the provision in the FAS document, Estimated Costings for Proposed Payroll Levy, for the payment of grants to levy-paying employers for the training of 40,000 first-time entrants to employment had been dropped and was not included in the PESP agreement. This appears to have been due to the fact that a broad-based levy was not acceptable.

As a result of a meeting between the Minister for Labour and a delegation from the Board of FAS, on 14th. March, 1991, the Minister decided to refer the question of funding to the Central Review Committee (CRC) of the PESP. Following discussions during 1991, the CRC finally agreed to a payroll levy of 0.25%, instead of the 0.5% proposed by FAS, applicable to the limited areas of construction, engineering, motor and printing sectors, instead of the broader base suggested by FAS, to finance the new apprenticeship system. According to a report in The Irish Times, dated 31st. March, 1992, FAS had hoped for a higher levy of 0.5 per cent but this had been resisted by the employers who argued that it was too much.(58) This agreement would have to be formally approved by the Government and it was not immediately clear whether, if approved, it would be included in the 1992 or in the 1993 Finance Bill. In the event, it was not included in either Bill but there was Government

agreement to introduce the necessary legislation in 1994. It was expected that the levy would be collected by increasing the employers' contribution to PRSI and that additional matching funding would be sought from the European Social Fund. As soon as the new 'apprentice levy' was introduced for the construction, engineering, motor and printing industries, the existing levy-grant schemes in these sectors would cease, except for the electronics element of the engineering designation. Discussions at CRC level on the amount of the levy ensured that the ban on apprentice intake, imposed on its members by the Construction Industry Federation on the grounds that the proposed levy was too narrowly based, was lifted; an action welcomed by the Minister for Labour in a statement on 11th. September 1991.(59) In this statement also, the Minister announced the introduction of the new apprenticeship system in 1992, and stated that the 1991 intake of apprentices would be the last under the existing system. He also announced that the names of the members of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, to be established by FAS, would be published shortly.

Two pilot schemes based on the new system, and for which draft curricula were being prepared, were planned for January, 1992. One was for motor apprentices, in the Waterford Training Centre, and the other for bricklayer apprentices, in the Ballyfermot Training Centre. The review of apprenticeship curricula was another major task. FAS proposed to appoint 75 Subject Matter Experts, three for each of the twenty-five trades, to undertake this work. The appointments were to be made on a temporary basis, for 10 to 12 weeks, at an estimated cost, for 1992, of £650,000. The work would be aided by an industrial survey of the apprentice training needs as perceived by industry.(60) The difficulties which faced FAS and the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, in its endeavours to introduce the new scheme, are captured in the following

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extract from a leading article in The Irish Times dated 28th. June, 1991:

SIPTU, the trade union representing the instructors involved in FAS apprenticeship training, is also threatening to boycott the proposed new system. The situation is utterly confused with the Central Review Committee of the PESP claiming that consultation has taken place and agreement registered, but with SIPTU, the CIF and other employer bodies claiming a lack of consultation and objecting strenuously to the new scheme. To add to the confusion, it appears that both the Confederation of Irish Industry and the Federation of Irish Employers have agreed to it.(61)

#### **The National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee (NAAC):**

The National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee was set up by the Board of FAS in September, 1991, and held its first meeting in October. Instead of the eight members originally proposed, and later changed to eighteen, it now consists of twenty-one, and is chaired by Mr. Kevin Duffy, an ICTU representative on the Board of FAS. The Committee is composed as follows: seven representatives of the FAS Board, five of trade unions, five of employer bodies, and one representative each of the Department of Education, FAS staff, and the FAS executive. Its Terms of Reference are:

to advise on standards, curricula, testing and certification for the new apprenticeship system

to advise on the modular structure of the new system for alternating periods of on and off-the-job training, within



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a framework of a maximum period of 40 weeks of off-the-job training/education

to advise on the duration of apprenticeship with reference to the training/education and developmental needs of each trade

to advise on arrangements for the delivery of apprentice training

to advise on entry requirements for each trade

to advise on the numbers of apprentices to achieve a satisfactory balance between supply and demand for apprentices

to advise on provisions for special groups such as the disadvantaged, the disabled, mature entrants and women

to advise on the designation of further trades

to monitor and review the operation of the new apprenticeship system and to advise on necessary adjustments

to advise on other matters relating to apprenticeship as requested by the Board of FAS from time to time.

In all cases the advice of the Committee will be to the Board of FAS. The term of office of the NAAC will be the same as that of the Board of FAS.(62) One of the problems in the apprenticeship area identified by the consultants in the NESC Report, Manpower Policy in Ireland, was the inability of the interests to come to grips with the need for change and the time taken, because of the amount of consultation involved, to

effect change. It would appear that this problem was not fully addressed in the New Apprenticeship. In addition to the Board of FAS, which is the decision-making body, (subject to the policy-making powers of the Department of Labour), the new system has also provided for an Apprenticeship sub-Committee of the Board itself, and also for a National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. In addition, the Board of FAS will have to contend with the superstructure of the PESP and its suggested advisory committees of ICTU, IBEC and CIF to oversee implementation. It is most unlikely that these structures, while they may extend the consultation process, will expedite decision-making or implementation. As the NESC Report put it, it is more likely to lead 'to a stalemate which is eventually resolved by means of an unsatisfactory compromise arrangement'.

**Conclusion:**

The two pilot schemes based on the new system, which were announced by the Minister for Labour, Bertie Ahern on 11th. September, 1991, were held up due to industrial relations difficulties in FAS. Finally, on the 30th. April, 1993, the Minister for State for Labour Affairs in the New Department of Enterprise and Employment, Mrs. Mary O'Rourke, announced the commencement of the two pilot schemes. Commenting on this announcement, the leading article in The Irish Times of the 10th. May 1993, pointing out that it had taken seven years to get a reformed system underway, commented:

Rarely has there been such total synchronisation of sentiment between employers and trade unions, with both the ICTU general secretary and the IBEC director-general welcoming the new system wholeheartedly. Only the Teachers Union of Ireland seems to have some residual reservations.

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In public press advertisements on 23rd. May 1993, FAS announced that two new apprenticeship schemes in brick-laying and motor mechanic had commenced on a pilot basis, in May, and that the new system would be phased in for all existing designated trades between September, 1993 and September, 1994. There was not a universal welcome for the new-style apprenticeship however, nor total acceptance of the reasons advanced for a major overhaul of the existing system. In a letter to The Irish Times on 31st May, signed by thirty-seven teachers of apprentices from the Dublin Institute of Technology, commenting on the recent leading article in the paper, maintained that:

The image you present of the current system as unregulated and lacking in standards and certification is erroneous.

They pointed out that the current system had clearly set standards, detailed curricula and proper assessment and testing. There was no need to dismantle the present system to introduce mandatory standards. Apprentices could already obtain an internationally recognised National Craft Certificate and this could be made mandatory. The letter stated that the new syllabi for a number of trades, on which some of the signatories were engaged as Subject Matter Experts, were incomplete and that, in any case, the pilot schemes would have to run for two and a half to three years for full evaluation to be effective. In their view, the new apprenticeship scheme had not yet been put into operation. In fact, a massive amount of work is still required of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, and its increased size and composition is bound to make decision-making a difficult and slow process. New apprenticeship rules and regulations, now being made under the 1967 Industrial Training Act provisions, will take a considerable time to draft and make into statutory instruments. Much more discussion, organisation and coordination will be required to put the new system in place.

One could question the strategy of embarking on such a major review so soon after the preceding one. A more efficient approach towards achieving the objectives set out in the Government's White Paper, might have been to use the undoubted authority of the Council of AnCO in the area of apprenticeship to make the adjustments necessary in the existing system. In a report, Industrial Training in Ireland, prepared for The Industrial Policy Review Group which issued the 'Culliton Report' in February, 1992, there were two comments in relation to the existing system:

Industry rates the training of apprentices very highly and the qualified craftsmen in Ireland are considered to compare very favourably with those trained in Germany.(63)

and

Because FAS is centrally involved in the provision of apprentice training, such (craft based) firms have forged strong links with FAS. The state training organisation is rated highly by such craft-based enterprises.(64)

This Report, (page vi), also recommends against the use of British certification/qualification standards in the Irish context, (re a suggestion made by the FAS Apprenticeship Review Group in relation to City and Guilds certification), saying it was 'inappropriate' as these were 'no longer an index of best European standards'.

Undoubtedly, the system had become costly as far as the State was concerned, but this was due partly to the practice by some employers of reducing their own apprentice intake, leaving it to AnCO to make up the shortfall, while other employers continued to recruit in the traditional way, and this situation was not helped by the fact that Dublin City VEC continued to

provide educational release facilities for those apprentices. Even so, costs to the State could have been reduced by more imaginative use of levy/grant funds, to ensure, for instance, that apprentice grants from them would qualify for ESF subvention. Again, the duration of off-the-job training and of block release could have been reduced with little loss of effectiveness, resulting in substantial cost savings. The payment of training allowances, instead of apprentice wage rates, particularly for unemployed apprentices on training courses, would have reduced costs. The National Craft Certificate, introduced as part of the first review was, in fact, a standards based certification system, though not a compulsory one. Whether or not making it compulsory as a licence to work at a craft will ever become fully effective is open to question. Even in Germany, certified and non-certified craftsmen exist, with the certified person generally getting preference in a tight employment situation. As regards 'multi-skilling', this was, as the Aer Lingus experience had shown, more a matter for employer/trade union and inter craft union agreements than a training problem. In fact, many of the craftsmen here are 'multi-skilled', if the normal off-the-job training of the fitter, the motor mechanic, the carpenter and even the bricklayer and the painter/decorator is analysed. Where a need did exist was for an industrial 'maintenance craftsman' who could undertake mechanical, electrical and electronic maintenance within the firm. There would be no difficulty in providing the training for this, particularly at post-apprenticeship level, the problems would arise in the work place but, as Aer Lingus demonstrated, these can be resolved.

This latest Review of Apprenticeship has formulated a plan for the future training of apprentices which has been agreed at the highest level. As yet it is only a plan, and a considerable amount of organisation, coordination, cooperation and goodwill

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will be needed to put it in place and make it work. It is a more complicated system than that which it is to replace, and what has yet to be fully fleshed out, is how it is to be made effective. In a report, in February, 1992, on a visit by a FAS group to Germany to study its apprenticeship system, regarded as the most advanced in Europe, the following comment is relevant in the Irish context:

The system is founded on absolute consensus between all parties viz Government Ministries (national and local), Government Agencies, Employer Organisations, Unions and Schools. Nothing is done until all are fully agreed but having reached this point it then happens as a combined effort by all.(65)

Finally, the Government Green Paper, Education for a Changing World, published in June 1992, and the Programme for a Partnership Government, published in January 1993, both have implications for the future of apprenticeship and these will be considered in a later chapter.

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- (58) The Irish Times. Employers Face New Levy for Training, 31st March, 1992.
- (59) Dept. of Labour, Press Release, Minister for Labour Announces Commencement of New Apprenticeship Scheme, 11th. September, 1991.
- (60) The Irish Times, Apprenticeship System Faces Radical Change Under New Plan, 3rd. January, 1992.
- (61) Ibid. Leading Article, Save the Scheme, 28th. June 1991.
- (62) National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, (FAS Board Paper.)
- (63) Roche and Tansey, op. cit. p.102.
- (64) Ibid. p.143.
- (65) Report, Study Visit to Germany, from ADG. Regions, (Internal FAS Report: 11th February, 1992)

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## Chapter Fourteen

### SPECIAL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES

#### 1. Background.

The 1931 Apprenticeship Act was, by and large, a failure. The Commission on Technical Education had recommended that, in the first instance, apprentice committees should be set up for the trades of building, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, motor garage work, the printing trades and hotel and restaurant work.(1) In fact, not one of these was designated under the Act and, of the nine trades which were eventually brought within its scope, at least one, Brush and Broommaking, was really a manufacturing operation and could scarcely have been regarded as a trade. The major existing occupations in the construction, engineering and printing industries were never designated nor were the newly developing trades in the electrical and motor sectors. The main reasons for this, as already noted, were that the designation of trades depended on a voluntary joint approach from employer and worker organisations, and there was no overall controlling body (other than the Ministry for Industry and Commerce) to promote designation. In any case, the indications were that, as early as 1936, the Department of Industry and Commerce had come to the conclusion that the Act was defective and was in need of revision. In addition, the approach adopted in the Act was excessively bureaucratic and legalistic and involved the making of separate rules and regulations in respect of the various trades and districts. Employer organisations and trade unions

were reluctant to become involved in such arrangements and, by and large, preferred to operate on the basis of their own existing procedures which had been developed as part of the industrial relations process. Self-imposed rules and regulations, which would have legal effect and which could involve penalties on their own members, did not appeal to either side. On the other hand, the fact that the 1930 Vocational Education Act made provision for the technical instruction and education of apprentices by local VECs, irrespective of whether or not trades were designated, supplied an alternative for those employers who wished to provide for the training of their workers. In fact, as has already been pointed out, most of the progress in the training and development of apprentices in the period 1930 to 1959, when An Cheard Chomhairle was established, took place under the provisions of the 1930 Vocational Education Act and not as a result of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act.

In the early years of the newly developing State, there were a number of initiatives aimed at modernising the infrastructure, improving living standards and providing employment through the development of native industries, all of which required a skilled workforce. These included the generation of electricity and its distribution throughout the State through the Shannon Scheme, the establishment of the Sugar Beet Industry and the development of the bogs as a source of native fuel. The motor industry, although in its infancy here, was also developing rapidly and required a new range of skills. An area where indigenous skills were practically non-existent, and where a need had been identified in the Air Corps of the Free State Army, was the maintenance of aircraft. Some of these skill requirements, such as that for electricians, technical personnel for the sugar factories and motor mechanics had been highlighted in the evidence given to the 1926/27 Commission on Technical Education. It was in areas such as these, where

skill shortages had been identified, that employers, in conjunction with VECs and with the support of the relevant trade unions, had initiated apprentice schemes which were outside the scope of the Apprenticeship Act. These schemes were to provide, not only for the employer's own requirements, but also, as a matter of policy in many cases, for national needs. In the period 1930 to 1959, the Army Air Corps Apprentice School at Baldonnell Aerodrome and the Army Apprentice School at Naas were established. Apprentice schemes in the Sugar Company, the ESB, Bord na Mona and CIE were set up. The Society of the Irish Motor Traders (SIMT), now the Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI), had its own very successful scheme which operated until the setting up of An Cheard Chomhairle in 1959. At a later period, again to meet identified needs, apprenticeship schemes, such as that operated by the Farm Apprenticeship Board, the Farriery Apprenticeship Scheme of Bord na gCapall and the Jockey Apprentice Scheme organised by the Racing Apprentice Centre of Education (RACE) were established. What was notable about all of these was that they were established by employers, with trade union involvement in most cases, and operated somewhat on the lines of the 'dual system' in Germany. Special arrangements were made with VECs to provide technical instruction and education to complement training on-the-job and excellent standards were achieved. An important feature of most of these schemes was that they were directly linked to the operational activities of their parent organisations. These were exposed to competitive market forces and, consequently, had to be at the cutting edge of new technologies. The practical experience on-the-job, therefore, ensured that apprentice training kept pace with changing technology. The Naas Army Apprentice School, unlike its Air Corps counterpart, tended, because of its location, to be institutionalised and was not exposed to similar competitive forces in its area of operations.

Quite a number of apprentices from these schemes secured prizes in Department of Education examinations and in national and international competitions. For example, in the 1963 International Competitions held in Dublin, at which 227 apprentices from thirteen countries competed, apprentices from CIE secured a silver and a bronze medal and a fourth place. In the National Competitions, conducted by the Department of Education in 1972, CIE apprentices secured six first, two second and two third places. Overall, apprentices from the ESB have won twelve International medals, including one gold. Another excellent feature of these schemes was the number of apprentices trained through them who later progressed to higher levels in industry and commerce and in the educational and training fields, a tribute to the 'hidden curriculum' of training in the workplace. In the case of the Air Corps for example, at least one apprentice has become general manager of an airline, others became pilots through the Air Corps Sergeant-Pilot training scheme and served later as senior captains with Aer Lingus and other airlines.

## **2. The Army Air Corps Apprentice Scheme**

### **The Beginnings:**

The Dail ratified the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 7th. January, 1922, and the Provisional Government was set up on the 14th. of that month to administer the twenty-six counties in the interregnum before the establishment of the Irish Free State on the 6th. December, 1922. The Provisional Government decided to proceed immediately with the implementation of the terms of the Treaty and, by the end of January, the uniformed army of the Irish Free State was being formed, having as its nucleus the Active

Service Unit of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Republican Army. It proceeded to take over army barracks from the British forces.(2) An Irish Aviation Department was set up in Beggars Bush Barracks and the Air Corps 'sprung up seemingly spontaneously in 1922'.(3) Baldonnel Aerodrome was taken over in February, 1922, but was not occupied until April, with the first Air Corps aeroplane landing there on 4th. July. The first Director of Military Aviation was Comdt-General W. J. McSweeney, an ex-RAF pilot who had been a Volunteer in England and who had made the arrangements to fly Michael Collins back to Ireland in an aeroplane, purchased for the purpose, should the Treaty negotiations break down and Collins, consequently, be in danger of arrest. At a meeting of the Air Council held on 23 March, 1922, and attended by Michael Collins, T.D., Minister for Finance, Richard Mulcahy, T.D., Minister for Defence, General O'Duffy, T.D., Chief of Staff and Comdt-General McSweeney, it was decided to establish a Flying School in the Air Corps and to adopt a proposal known as the Dublin Corporation Scheme for the creation of a School of Aeronautics.(4)

In December, 1922, in response to an enquiry made by the Cork Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment, at the behest of 'a member of Cummann na mBan in Cork City', the Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce wrote to the Secretary, Department of Defence, asking if vacancies for apprentices existed in Baldonnel Aerodrome. In a reply dated 15th. December, 1922, the Director of Military Aviation, Comdt-General McSweeney, stated:

I have already started training apprentices as fitters on aeroengines and riggers on aeroplanes. The boys I have at present have done one to two years at Technical Schools and are paid at the rate of 2/= per day: they are of course soldiers. I am prepared to take on four more

immediately, and in the event of there being many applications would be glad if these were all forwarded to me.(5)

These Air Corps apprentices were probably the first in the Army and no doubt witnessed the start of the historic Bremen journey when the first successful east to west non-stop transatlantic flight took off from Baldonnell on the 12th. April, 1928, with an Air Corps pilot, Comdt. J. C. Fitzmaurice on board. The first Director of Military Aviation had also set a pattern for apprentices in the Defence Forces that was to continue: they were first of all soldiers with the same pay and conditions as other enlisted men. By the end of 1923, the Flying School had been established and had six of its sixteen pupils flying solo.

There appear to have been no further developments with the Dublin Corporation School of Aeronautics at that stage. Later, from the early 1950s, the City of Dublin VEC, established under the 1930 Vocational Education Act, provided night classes in aircraft mechanics in Bolton St. College which were attended by apprentices and other personnel from the Air Corps and from Aer Lingus. Similiar courses covering the electrical components of aircraft became available in Kevin St. College. A significant advance, however, was the establishment of an Aero Engineering Department in Bolton St. College, which began with a full-time three-year course for the first twelve aircraft apprentices recruited by Aer Lingus in January, 1962. This course, which was the first of its kind in Ireland, provided instruction in the Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced Technological syllabi of the Department of Education and in Aero Engine Practices, Parts 1 and 2, of the City and Guilds. The first head of this Department was a man who had entered the Air Corps as an apprentice in 1936, and who earlier, together with the civilian instructor appointed by the Air Corps in 1935, provided the instruction at the night classes in the College.

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**The Air Corps Apprentice School:**

In a paper put before the Defence Council on 3rd. March, 1930, and headed, Enlistment of Boys for Training and Service in the Army Air Corps, it was stated:

Since 1926 the Corps has been continually under strength with the result that the available personnel have been fully occupied in keeping a limited number of machines in flying order. Under such conditions regular training or systematic instruction has been found to be impossible, with the result that the majority of the men are not trained to the standard required.

As a general rule the type of man who enlisted for general service was rarely found to be suitable for training in mechanical duties in a Corps which has no parallel in civil life.(6)

The paper went on to propose that some 30 to 40 boys, between the ages of 16 and 17½ years, should be admitted to the Air Corps annually on a special enlistment basis for twelve years - six years regular service and six years on reserve - to be trained as aircraft mechanics. They would be expected to have reached a good standard of general and technical education through attendance at Technical Schools. It was proposed that a Training School should be established and that the boys would be accommodated and 'messed' separately. A senior NCO, 'qualified as a Drill and P.T Instructor', would be put in charge of them and with the assistance of the Chaplain, the Aeronautical Engineer and other instructors, their 'educational training' would be carried out in the Air Corps. The paper also stated:



It is felt that by this means and this means only, can we hope to build up a properly trained and adequate staff and make a Corps Reserve possible.(7)

Although the Defence Council approved the proposals at its meeting in March, 1930, it was not until 1936, that the first class of apprentices reported to Baldonnell. The long delay in getting the scheme operational was due to a number of factors. No doubt, the financial state of the country at the time and the reluctance of the Department of Finance to subvent new projects, the controls being implemented by the Civil Service and the change of Government in 1932, all had their effect. In addition, in the intervening period, discussions were held with the Irish Trade Union Congress seeking approval for the scheme on the basis that apprentices trained in the Air Corps would have access to civilian employment when they left the Army. Congress gave its official approval in October, 1931.(8) As it was intended that, except for practical training in the workshops, the apprentices would be kept apart from other troops until they were eighteen years of age, separate living and dining accommodation had to be provided. It thus was to become the first residential apprenticeship scheme in the Irish Free State. Existing buildings were converted for the purpose, a lecture hall was built and a workshop was taken over and equipped for instructional purposes. This conversion work took considerable time and was not completed until February, 1936. Meanwile, in January, 1935, a civilian chief instructor was appointed. A visit was arranged to the Royal Air Force Apprentice Schools at Halton, England, to examine how schemes there were organised and administered. The chief instructor then drew up specifications for machinery, tools and equipment and was also responsible for developing instructional schedules. Selection was to be based on an interview and a school report, provided the required educational standard had been reached. Interviews were held in December, 1935, and the

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first class of twenty Air Corps apprentices reported to Baldonnel Aerodrome on 19th. March, 1936. Thus began an apprenticeship scheme, which is still in operation after fifty-seven years and which has made a major contribution to the development of Irish aviation both in the military and civilian fields.

### **The Training Programme:**

Initially, the apprentices did eight weeks military training - they were, after all, soldiers - and after this, their technical training began. In the first year, a broad-based programme was provided, covering the wide range of practical skills needed for the maintenance of aircraft at the time. These included basic fitting, welding, turning, sheet-metal work, electricity, mechanical drawing, theory of flight, airframes and engines. An Army schoolmaster, with the rank of Sergeant, provided general education, covering subjects such as English, Irish, History and Civics. In the second year, more advanced training was given and the apprentices were directed towards the various trades that existed in the Air Corps. These included fitters, riggers, carpenters, fabric workers, electricians, instrument repairers and draughtsmen. The period of off-the-job training in the Apprentice School lasted for the first two years, following which the apprentices, having been graded as one-star technicians, were transferred to the main workshops and aircraft hangars to continue their training, in what was known as the Technical Wing of the Air Corps. The apprenticeship was considered completed at the end of five years when the apprentices were graded as aircraft mechanics.(9) As has already been pointed out, the apprentices were soldiers and were required to take part in the military duties of the station. During the 'Emergency', when anti-aircraft guns were sited on Baldonnel Aerodrome, the

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apprentices formed part of the gun crews and were responsible for providing range-finding and tracking information. Obviously their additional training paid dividends, for in 1942, the Baldonnell battery, one of fourteen anti-aircraft gun sites operational in the State at the time, won the prize for the best anti-aircraft unit in the Army.(10)

### **Developments:**

The long association between the Air Corps and Aer Lingus, in the supply both of technical staff and of airline pilots, also began in 1936, when, on the 27th May, the first scheduled Aer Lingus service from Ireland took off from Baldonnell Aerodrome for Bristol. The company was to continue to operate from Baldonnell until Dublin Airport was opened in 1946, and many technicians who had commenced as apprentices in the Air Corps were to secure employment with it. As the Air Corps developed, the 'crates' of the 1922 period, held together 'with dope painted on linen',(11) were replaced by more sophisticated aircraft. Twin-engined machines were introduced in 1937, and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, saw the arrival of up-to-date bomber and fighter planes, such as Hurricanes and, later, Seafires. Jets arrived in 1956, helicopters in 1963, and fishery patrols, using special aircraft, commenced in 1977. The Ministerial Air Transport service began in 1979, and this led eventually, in 1991, to the procurement of a Gulfstream G 4, a 'state of the art' jet with transatlantic capability. These developments placed additional technical demands on the technicians servicing these aircraft and, consequently, on the apprentice training programme.

Apprentice recruitment in the early stages was difficult, even aircraft mechanic apprenticeships were not considered attractive career outlets at that time. For example, in 1938,

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there were only 120 applicants for 30 places in the third apprentice class, (compared with 5,000 for 20 places in 1986). In 1937, apprentices who were under 17 years of age received the equivalent of 17½ p. per week (it was £110.51 per week in 1986). After the war, in an effort to bring the Air Corps up to strength, an alternative to the normal apprenticeship scheme was introduced. Known as the Direct Entrants Scheme, personnel between the ages of 17 and 28, with Primary Certificate education, were recruited for training as Air Corps technicians. Following the normal military training, the Direct Entrants then completed one year's intensive technical training in the Apprentice School, after which they were posted to units in the Corps to complete their training as technicians. This scheme continued in conjunction with the normal apprentice programme until 1963 when it was discontinued. Competition for apprentices also increased when Aer Lingus commenced its own apprenticeship scheme in 1962. In addition, many Air Corps technicians availed of a scheme whereby they could purchase their release from their Army service contract to avail of the many well paid jobs which were becoming available in Irish industry. Many took employment, not only as aircraft technicians, but also in the general engineering fields as Ireland became industrialised.

In 1961, following the lead set by An Cheard Chomhairle, the educational entry standard was altered, making possession of the Day Group Certificate a requirement for an Air Corps apprenticeship. In 1967, AnCO entered into negotiations with the Corps in regard to the registration of its apprentices. As a result, the Army Chief-of-Staff appointed an examining board to review the training of apprentices. A report was submitted, in 1968, and a major review of trade categories was recommended. This review proposed a considerable degree of multi-skilling, the existing trades were reduced to two main categories, the trade of aircraft mechanic (engine and

airframe) and the trade of aircraft mechanic (electrical). This arrangement was accepted by AnCO and all Air Corps apprentices were registered with the Industrial Training Authority on that basis. In 1971, there was a new development when two vocational teachers were provided by the Co. Dublin VEC to prepare the apprentices for the Junior Trade examinations of the Department of Education, and in 1975, the Apprentice School was approved by the Department as an examination centre. In addition to the two teachers provided by the VEC, there were also military instructors for technical subjects and practical work in the School and the majority of these had undergone courses in Methods of Instruction with The Royal Air Force. It has already been pointed out that the scheme was a residential one and living conditions for the apprentices had been considerably improved when new accommodation was provided around 1950. The original Apprentice School was burned down in 1966, and it was 1977 before it was replaced with a new purpose-built building.

**Tests and Certification:**

The Air Corps had, at this stage, its own trade tests, the passing of which qualified apprentices as technicians in various Army grades, for which extra technical pay was awarded. In addition, apprentices took Department of Education examinations, and in 1980 for the first time, they entered for the examinations of the City and Guilds of London Institute in Aeronautical Engineering Craft Studies. The School was recognised by that Institute as a training establishment in 1983. To cater for the increasing sophistication of aircraft in the Corps, a third year specialisation course has now been added to the curriculum, to enable apprentices to get practical experience on the various models of aircraft before being assigned to operational duties. Qualified aircraft mechanics would also have undergone tests to secure licences from the

Government Department responsible for civil aviation. At the annual passing out parade of apprentices a number of awards are made which have included City and Guilds and Department of Education medals, the AnCO third level scholarship, the Aer Lingus Shield and the Kelly-Rogers Trophy. This latter award is presented for the best paper delivered by an apprentice to the Dublin Branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

**Summary:**

Since its establishment in 1936, the Air Corps has, to date (1993), recruited some 2,000 apprentices of whom five were girls, the first four female apprentices in the Army being recruited into the Air Corps in 1991. Not only have these apprentices provided for the technical requirements of the Corps over the years, but in addition, many of them have found prominent positions in Irish industry. At least one became general manager of an airline, some have set up their own businesses, others have become pilots, through the Air Corps Sergeant-Pilot training scheme, and have served as senior captains with Aer Lingus and other airlines. Others have become flight engineers, quite a number have been commissioned as officers in the Defence Forces and at least one has become an award-winning actor. Sport also played a major role in the life of the Air Corps apprentice, and some became international figures in sporting activities.(12)

The Apprentice School is now part of the Air Corps Training Wing, the other units of which are the Air Corps Training Depot, the Basic Flying Training School and the Advanced Flying Training School. By comparison with the first apprentices recruited into the School in 1936, an article in An Cosantoir describes their modern counterparts as follows:

Today the Air Corps Apprentice on enlisting is likely to have his Leaving Certificate and to be one of at least 5,000 applicants. He will study subjects such as Engineering Science, Electronics, Aircraft materials and construction, Theory of Flight, Avionics and Mathematics. His training will be carried out in a modern well equipped school under the guidance of experienced military and civilian instructors. This reflects fifty years of continuous progress and adaption to cope with the complexities of modern aircraft design and technology.(13)

The Air Corps scheme illustrates two important facets of apprenticeship. Firstly, it demonstrates how effectively a well designed basic programme in a training workshop, combined with carefully planned related instruction and systematic and controlled practical experience in the work place - a combination of elements which only a well balanced apprenticeship programme provides - can cope with changes in technology. The developments in the design and operation of aircraft which have taken place in the period since the inception of the scheme in 1936 are awesome, yet the scheme has been able to adjust to them without any major change in its basic structure. In practice, the workplace tends to be ahead of academic institutions in technological developments, and it is unlikely that an institutionalised training system could have satisfied the needs as effectively, except perhaps in the area of avionics. Secondly, the fact that so many apprentices, often with minimum formal education, could progress successfully and build careers in other spheres of industrial and commercial activity indicates that apprenticeship, through its 'hidden curriculum' already referred to, provides a type of 'industrial education' which is often unrecognised in the formal sense and not generally obtainable in other institutions.

### 3. The Irish Sugar Company Apprenticeship Scheme.

#### Introduction:

Members of the Commission on Technical Education visited the Irish Sugar-Beet factory in Carlow in the course of the investigations into the requirements for technical education in Ireland and Mr. Theodor Hayek, who was Technical Manager at the factory, is recorded as a person who supplied written evidence and other data for the use of the Commission.(14) By 1932, Comhlucht Siuicre Eireann Teoranta (Irish Sugar Company) had been established and new beet factories had started operations in Mallow, Tuam and Thurles. In its Report for 1932/33, the Department of Education records the award of six scholarships in Sugar Technology to university graduates. These scholarships, which were two-thirds funded by the Department, were tenable at the School of Sugar Manufacture of the Royal Technical College in Glasgow and were intended to train suitable persons for technological posts in the new factories.(15) The courses began in January, 1934, and ended the following August. Following this initiative, and after consultations between the Company and the Departments of Education and of Industry and Commerce, a comprehensive scheme for the training of apprentices was drawn up in 1933. The Department of Education organised and conducted a special examination which was to be used as a basis for the selection of 54 apprentices. The subjects were Irish, English, Mathematics, Drawing, Woodwork and Metalwork and the examination was open to boys between the ages of 16 and 20 years from any part of Ireland. There were 432 applicants, 288 of whom sat the examination in nine centres, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Mallow, Thurles, Sligo, Ballina and Tralee. Of these, the 72 receiving the highest marks were interviewed



by the Company and were awarded apprenticeships instead of the 54 as originally planned. Practically all of those who were interviewed were students from technical schools and 15 counties were represented

The trades specified were sugar cooking, mechanical fitting, electrical fitting, carpentry and bricklaying. The apprenticeship period was five years and apprentices would be paid a progressive hourly rate depending on their year of apprenticeship. The Company also undertook, in certain circumstances, to pay an allowance to those apprentices who were unable to reside at home while serving their time, an initiative which provided for some element of equality of access to apprenticeship for rural applicants. The training scheme, which first came into operation during the 1934/35 school year, was set out as follows:

As far as conditions permit, the apprentices in each factory will be divided into two groups. Both groups will be engaged in the factory during the manufacturing seasons, but must also attend such evening classes as the Company may prescribe in the local Technical School. During the first non-manufacturing season, one group will be engaged in the factory while the other group will be required to attend a specially designed class of instruction in the local Technical School. In subsequent years, this arrangement for the employment of the group will be alternated.(16)

It was also provided that apprentices would receive their normal pay while attending technical school and, if they had to attend classes at schools other than their local one, an additional allowance would be granted.

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**Organisation of Courses:**

Arrangements were made to carry out the terms of the scheme in the technical schools in Mallow and Thurles where facilities were available. However, there was as yet no technical school in Tuam, and in Carlow the existing facilities were insufficient. In the case of apprentices from these factories, therefore, the initial courses were conducted at the Technical School at Ringsend. These special courses were of six months duration and were timetabled for 36 hours per week, with all apprentices following roughly the same programme. The subjects covered were metalwork, welding, woodwork, electricity, workshop science, mathematics, drawing (freehand, mechanical and workshops), Irish, English and physical training. In the case of the sugar cook apprentices, whose sugar cooking duties would be of a seasonal nature, 'it was necessary to take into account the fact that they should have an alternative trade'.(17) They received additional training in woodwork and somewhat less in electricity. In the 1937/38 school year, courses, within the existing building trades classes, were provided at the Technical Institute, Bolton St. for six apprentices; carpenters and bricklayers, from the Carlow, Mallow, Tuam and Thurles factories. Evening classes were also provided at Carlow, Mallow and Thurles technical schools for the apprentices retained in the factories during the manufacturing season.

Similar arrangements had to be made in the 1935/36 school year to accommodate the apprentices who had been retained in the factories for the duration of the sugar campaign. By this stage, however, the facilities at the Carlow Technical School had been improved, no doubt in response to the demand, and only the apprentices from the Tuam factory attended the course at Ringsend. Special classes were also provided in their local schools for those apprentices who had remained in the factories

and these classes covered metalwork, woodwork, electrical engineering and science. In relation to training in the later years of their apprenticeships, it was considered that the limited equipment available in the local technical schools would not be adequate for the specialised training needed. Following discussions between the Department and the Company, it was decided to group apprentices according to their trades and to provide the specialised trade instruction deemed necessary in selected centres. In addition, it was decided that the courses to be followed would be in line with the new scheme of Technical School examinations and that the apprentices would take the Junior Trade tests appropriate to their trades.(18) Accordingly, two specialised courses, one for fitters/turners and the other in electrical installation work were provided by the City of Dublin VEC in Ringsend and Kevin St. Technical Schools respectively. Both were whole-time day courses of approximately 30 hours duration per week and they ran from February to the end of September with August as a vacation period.

**Tests and Examinations:**

A total of 35 apprentices attended the courses, at the end of which they took the practical and written examinations, Junior Stage, in Electrical Installation and in Fitters and Turners Work, with an apprentice from Tuam securing first prize in the Junior Trade Test. Apprentices also secured good results in the more advanced examinations in science and technology. Commenting on the results, the Company had this to say:

The results in the case of the apprentices who attended the Ringsend Technical School are most satisfactory, particularly when it is remembered that the Technological

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Examinations are something over and above what is expected of the ordinary apprentice.(19)

The Departmental Report went on to point out that the arrangements made with the City of Dublin VEC, in this instance, was the first important application of Section 40 of the Vocational Education Act which provided for cooperation between VECs in the provision of courses. The VECs in the areas where the Sugar Factories were located, and which were responsible under the Act for the provision of the training, paid £10 per apprentice to the City of Dublin VEC for the facilities provided. A spin-off effect of the scheme was the development and improvement of engineering workshop facilities in local technical schools to meet the demand created for instruction. In the 1937/38 Report of the Department of Education it was stated that all engineering apprentices had by then been trained to the Junior Trade standard and that future courses would be devised to bring the standard of training up to that required for the Senior Trade certificates. The scheme thus provided a ready-made controlled pilot project for the Department to develop its Junior and Senior Trade examinations.

#### **An Assessment:**

In the early stages of its development, the Irish Sugar Company had to rely largely on imported technology and expertise. These special apprentice courses represented a successful experiment in developing its own technical staff. The one-to-one relationship between the experienced craftsman and his apprentice, solving real problems in the workplace, is the ideal medium and learning environment for the transfer of skill and technical know-how. This transfer would be considerably augmented and facilitated by the skills and knowledge acquired

by the apprentice on a well structured initial basic training course. The motivational effect of being selected for training and of becoming a skilled worker in a new industry would be an added factor. The apprentices trained on these courses provided a skill base of craftsmen on which the subsequent successful technical development of Irish Sugar and its associated companies was built. They also passed on their skills and knowledge to the many apprentices who were later to be recruited and trained by the Company. Like those of the Air Corps, some of these apprentices have progressed to other careers as teachers, technical representatives, owners of their own businesses and to supervisory positions in the Company. Many have achieved awards in the National Apprentice Competitions and have represented Ireland at international level. Following the initial special courses, Irish Sugar, which eventually had capacity to train about 120 apprentices, organised their training on-the-job coupled with appropriate day and block release to courses in local vocational schools and colleges. A training officer was appointed in each factory to supervise these arrangements. When off-the-job training was introduced as part of the New Apprenticeship in 1976, the Irish Sugar Company apprentices were sent to AnCO Training Centres in their first year.

Interviewed in the AnCO News of February, 1976, the then Group Training Manager of Irish Sugar estimated that over the years the Company had trained 1,600 apprentices, 70% of whom were fitters and 20% electricians and he added, 'we regard this with a certain degree of modest pride. We have pioneered a lot of craft education in rural areas'.(20) This latter point is worthy of comment. The sugar factories were established in rural areas where the raw material, sugar-beet, could be successfully grown, and they were adjacent to railheads for ease of transportation. They brought to these areas new technical expertise and so helped in the industrialisation of

the country. Their first special apprentice scheme, which opened recruitment to the whole of Ireland, and which made provision for the payment of allowances to apprentices who had to live away from home during their training, provided opportunities for young people to move from non-industrial rural to urban areas to avail of training in skills which did not exist in their home areas. The Sugar Company also considered that it had an obligation to train apprentices in excess of its own requirements in the national interest and in this way provided additional job opportunities. In this context too, it is worth mentioning that Bord na Mona operated an apprenticeship scheme on similiar lines to that of the Sugar Company, using technical schools in Naas and Lanesboro, and also made a considerable contribution to the development of craft skills in rural Ireland. In fact, whereas Irish Sugar in its initial stages had to import much of its technology, Bord na Mona developed its own, using native craft skills, and eventually exported it to other countries.

#### **4. The ESB Apprenticeship Scheme.**

##### **Origins:**

The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) was the first semi-State body to be established in Ireland. It was formally set up under Section 2 of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1927, by an order of the executive council of the Government of W.T.Cosgrave, on the 11th. August, 1927.(21) The Bill had been piloted through the Oireachtas, against considerable opposition, by the then Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr. Patrick McGilligan, who later steered the 1931 Apprenticeship Bill through the Dail. In general, the Board was responsible for the production and generation of electricity at the Shannon Scheme, as soon as the

works there were completed, and for the transmission, distribution and sale of this electricity within the Free State.

The Commission on Technical Education had also visited 'the important works in connection with the Shannon Power Development Schemes' and devoted nine paragraphs in its Report to matters dealing with Electrical Engineering.(22) The Commission estimated that, for the wiring of approximately 150,000 houses, 300 to 400 electricians would be needed if the work was to be accomplished in 18 months to two years and commented:

We are not in a position to say how far these numbers can be supplied from electricians resident in the Saorstat, but we fear that they cannot be supplied to any great extent, and if so the situation is serious.(23)

In fact, in 1928, the newly established Board, which had the same concerns, carried out a census which showed that there were sufficient skilled electricians in the country to carry out the work.(24) This resulted from the fact that, at the establishment of the Irish Free State, there were 160 electrical undertakings producing electricity in the twenty-six counties. The majority of these were small and privately owned, but the bigger plants, except those in Cork and Galway, were in public ownership, mainly that of the local authorities. Many of the smaller plants, however, produced direct current only.(25) Electricity and magnetism had been taught in Kevin St. Technical School as early as 1888 and classes in 'electric lighting' were conducted there during the 1896/97 session, when two teachers were available for giving instruction.(26)

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In an article, ESB Training Programmes, by the Manager Manpower, in Aontas Review it was stated:

In the early days of the ESB there was no industrial base in the State and the job of building our first Generating Station at Ardnacrusha and the transmission system to link this into Dublin was carried out by German contractors. Very early on in the 1930's however, realising its vulnerability by our dependence on expatriate technicians the ESB set up its own Apprenticeship Scheme for electricians and fitters which was probably the State's first major step in building self-sufficiency in native craft skills.(27)

While the Irish Sugar Company might take issue with the final part of this statement, the ESB scheme, as it developed over the years, became recognised as an outstanding example of an effective craft training programme, and an ESB apprenticeship became, and still remains, a highly prized career opportunity.

**Development:**

In the Report of the Department of Education for the 1937/38 school year,(28) arrangements made between the ESB, the Department and the various VECs for a scheme which would make suitable provision for the technical school training of all electrical apprentices in the ESB were outlined. The scheme should fulfil the following conditions:

- (i) provide the widest possible training in craftsmanship in order to check the tendency towards craft specialisation inherent in all large undertakings, and,



(ii) provide associated courses in Science and Electrical Technology bearing on the Board's special requirements in Electrical Installation and Servicing Work.(29)

The scheme was put into operation during the 1937/38 school session and the classes were conducted at the Kevin St. technical college. The apprentices, who came from many locations, were trained on whole-time day courses consisting of 32 hours instruction per week. In the first, second, third and fourth years of apprenticeship, these were of three months duration while the fifth year course lasted for one month. The three-monthly courses ran from October to December, from January to March and from April to June, while fifth year apprentices attended in July. Apprentices were prepared for the Junior Trade tests in Electrical Engineering at the end of the second year and for the Senior Trade tests at the end of their fourth year, the Department undertaking to provide special examinations for this purpose, an indication of the Department's flexibility in meeting the demands of industry. Apprentices were also encouraged to take the appropriate technological examinations. In the fifth year, instruction in specialised areas, such as refrigeration, cable jointing, welding and armature winding, was provided and the apprentices sat for such examinations of the Department, and of the City and Guilds, as were found suitable. The subjects included mathematics, engineering science, electrical installation, workshops practice, technical drawing, electrotechnology and English, which involved composition, precis and technical reports. Approximately half the programme consisted of practical work. Visits to various sections of the ESB's operations in the Dublin area were organised to provide the apprentices with a better insight into activities associated with the generation, distribution and utilisation of electricity. A novel feature was the provision of a 'link course', a form of correspondence course, operated by teachers

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and funded by the Board, to bridge the period between successive release courses in the technical college.

These apprentice courses were, in effect, the first block release courses in Ireland. They continue to form part of the ESB apprenticeship scheme, although other colleges now provide them, in addition to Kevin St. A more significant development, however, was that An Cheard Chomhairle, and later AnCO, developed the concept, in order to provide educational release for the many apprentices for whom day-release courses could not be provided in local technical schools. Block release enabled viable classes of apprentices, from scattered locations and rural areas, to be organised in accordance with their year of apprenticeship and their trade, and scheduled for courses, of eight to twelve weeks duration, in colleges where the relevant trade teachers and the appropriate equipment were available. The arrangements were further facilitated by the availability of State subsidised accommodation and travel allowances for apprentices living away from home while on courses. Again, this was a significant initiative to provide for equality of access to technical education for apprentices in non-urban areas. Block release attendances reached a peak in the 1983/84 school session when 8,132 attended, with a further 5,415 on day release.(30) An added advantage, again adapted from the ESB scheme, was that apprentices were able to take the Junior and Senior Trade examinations at the end of their block release courses.

In addition to the training of two categories of electrical apprentices, one to provide electricians to service the requirements of consumers and the other to train electricians for the operation of generating stations, the ESB also initiated a mechanical apprentice scheme to supply fitters for the installation and maintenance of electrical plant and equipment in these stations. This scheme, which was similar in

general design to that for electrical apprentices, was conducted in cooperation with Bolton St. Technical College. Both schemes were initially under the control of a central ESB department located in Dublin. In the early 1960s the training of the entire organisation was reviewed and updated and this included training for adults as well as apprentices. The result was that, whereas common core training would remain the responsibility of the personnel department, specialised training requirements were decentralised to the technical function concerned. In addition to this functional decentralisation, apprenticeship was also decentralised on a regional basis and ten apprentice training centres were established. Based on this restructuring, training programmes for all apprentices were developed which involved a combination of varying periods of off-the-job training in a district apprentice training centre coupled with block release of eleven weeks duration, and training on-the-job, throughout the apprenticeship. In the case of the electrical apprentices, the educational release extended over three years, and was organised in Kevin St., in the Cork, Dundalk, Galway and Waterford Regional Technical Colleges and in the Limerick School of Engineering. Release for mechanical apprentices extended over four years and took place in the College of Technology, Bolton St.

**Current Operations:**

At its peak period, the ESB would have had approximately 600 apprentices in training. Currently there is a total of 232 and the number of its apprentice training centres has been reduced to two. The Company has its own craft training department with a professional training staff. Both An Cheard Chomhairle and AnCO, apart from registering its apprentices and from availing of its facilities in special cases, accepted the

ESB scheme as an excellent example of how apprentices should be trained. It had a sophisticated national selection procedure, with its own educational entry qualifications which were well above the statutory minimum. The fact that it receives around 200 applicants for each of its vacancies is in itself an indication of the high rating of an ESB apprenticeship. It has its own curriculum section which has developed very advanced material for all of its courses. This includes Tutor and Learner Briefs, Task Support Information, Progress Checks, Self Assessment and Tutor Assessment Cards in respect of the various elements of the syllabus. The organisation takes considerable pride in the fact that almost all its electricians, fitters, supervisors, and technical staff (draughtspersons, technicians, etc.) were former apprentices trained by the ESB. Its apprentices have won many national awards and the Board has its own awards system based on performances in examinations of the Department of Education and of the City and Guilds of London. Its apprentices have represented Ireland at the International Competitions and have won twelve medals, including one gold, and a number of commendations of merit. Many persons who have graduated through the scheme hold responsible positions both at home and abroad and the ability of the ESB to win consultancy contracts overseas, in the face of strong international competition, is in itself a tribute to the effectiveness of its training systems generally.

**Social Responsibility and Cooperation with AnCO:**

As in the case of the Irish Sugar Company, the ESB also considered that it should train in excess of its own needs to meet national requirements and consistently did so. In particular, it cooperated with AnCO in the organisation of 'Apprentice to Craftsman' schemes in the period 1975 to 1984,

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when the recruitment of apprentices was adversely affected by the downturn in economic activity. These schemes provided for the recruitment each year by the ESB of fifty apprentices surplus to their own requirements who would be retained by the Company until they had completed their apprenticeships. In addition, some apprentices whose apprenticeships were terminated as a result of the economic recession were given the opportunity to complete them in the ESB. The Board, at the request of AnCO, also provided many specialised short training courses in areas such as electronics, draughtsmanship and instrumentation for apprentices who were out of work. All these initiatives qualified for subvention from the European Social Fund and represented very effective cooperation between the State Training Authority and a national utility in helping to alleviate unemployment problems among apprentices.

#### **The ESB Apprentice of the Future:**

In a speech delivered at the John Marcus O'Sullivan Memorial Lecture in Tralee in October, 1989, the then Chief Executive of the ESB, Dr. Paddy Moriarty, speaking to the theme, The Future is Here, cited proposed fundamental changes in the ESB apprentice training scheme as a practical example to illustrate his lecture. He said:

Whilst it was among the best available yesterday, a different mix of competencies will be needed in the future. The training will have a future focus in every respect and will cover the range of everything needed for the ESB to be the best electrical utility in the world. Not only will it cover technical and skill learning but it will educate in the full sense on social responsibility, culture, heritage, customer service and civics. .... We want to develop people who can keep abreast of change and

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tackle a wide range of work without the demarcations and restrictions which belong to another age.(31)

In May 1990, the ESB issued a document, The New Apprenticeship Scheme - A Programme for Change. This was based on an internal review of the apprenticeship system begun in 1988, and it proposed that a new electrical apprenticeship would be implemented from September, 1990. The content and methodology were to be fundamentally changed with the emphasis placed on training an apprentice with competencies specific to ESB requirements. A more comprehensive assessment and certification system would be installed to include an electrical examination set by the ESB but certified by the City and Guilds, in addition to those of the Department of Education. Modules of the City and Guilds Information Technology Scheme, i.e. Introductory Computers and Computing, Introductory Technical and Graphical Communications, Customer Care and Supporting Administration and Introductory Health and Safety would be added and form an examinable part of the course. At least four Practical Qualifying Tasks, undertaken during on-the-job training with the aim of fostering teamwork, maturity and self reliance would be introduced. These would be assessed by ESB staff and certified by City and Guilds, and would form part of the certification system. The basic structure of the programme was not changed with apprentices undergoing periods of off-the-job training, block release and practical training on-the-job in a four year apprenticeship. However, periods were rescheduled to provide for longer continuous on-the-job elements and to introduce this earlier in the programme. Adult apprenticeships would be available to existing staff and a special bridging module provided both for adults and for entrants who did not have Leaving Certificates.(33)

As the Chief Executive had outlined in his lecture, this new approach was focused on the future. It was a departure from a

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system where the application of manual and diagnostic skills and knowledge were regarded as the main competencies of the craftsman. Other elements have now been added to the programme to supplement these core skills: teamwork; self reliance; adaptability; customer awareness and computer compatibility. Ownership of, and responsibility for one's own learning, not only during apprenticeship but also as a foundation for a process of life-long learning, have been included. While some would argue that most of these competencies always formed part of a good apprenticeship, the fact that they have been identified and formalised in the curriculum is indeed a step forward.

### **5. Motor Apprentice Scheme.**

#### **Society of Irish Motor Traders, Ltd. (SIMT).**

##### **Origins:**

The Society of Irish Motor Traders and a number of individual automobile engineers were listed among the witnesses at the Commission on Technical Education. According to the Commission, the repairing of automobiles was, at that time, 'an important and widespread industry in the Saorstát'. However, the Report went on to say:

Yet in few industries is there to be found so great a state of disorganisation from the point of view of the technical training of those engaged therein.(34)

Apprentices were paying premiums to be taken into garages, irrespective of their standard of education, which was generally very low. Employers in many cases took little interest in their training and 'frequently the garage itself

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contains neither the requisite equipment nor mechanics qualified to teach the boy his trade'. The Commission considered that apprentices entering the motor trade should at least have followed a two-year continuation course in a technical school and should not be accepted into the trade unless they showed an aptitude for garage work at the end of this course. The Commission also identified that, whereas there had been a rapid growth in the demand for instruction in motor car engineering, there had been no instructors available to meet the demand. It stated:

The 'practical' man who is available occasionally, lacks the fundamental training in engineering needed for devising a progressive educational plan, and his lessons develop into an unconnected series of workshops hints.(35)

To meet this need, the Commission recommended that a one year's course for the training of instructors should be held in the Central Technical School and that successful participants be awarded a certificate entitling them to provisional recognition as teachers of motor car engineering. It was hoped that this initiative would ensure that teachers would be available in a short time to conduct classes in most of the large and small towns.

The SIMT, in its evidence, submitted proposals for the organisation of the motor trade to ensure the proper training of young persons who were apprenticed to it. These proposals included a minimum age qualification and a specified educational standard for entry to the trade. 'Apprenticeship papers' should not be issued to any person without the seals of the Society and the Department of Education and these seals should only be 'affixed' when the required standards of education and skill had been reached. It was also proposed that an educational committee should be appointed by the Society



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which would act in cooperation with the educational authorities to supervise arrangements. This committee would deal with the whole area of apprenticeship in the motor trade, including apprentice numbers, supervision of classes and the suitability of garages for training. The Society also proposed to secure that any certificates of qualification issued would be recognised by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, Ltd. in London, and by the motor trade in any other country, - a form of international recognition. As these proposals followed closely along the lines of the Apprenticeship Committees advocated by the Commission itself, it was recommended that they should be adopted 'as the best means of remedying the present defective system of training in the trade'.

There appears to have been few developments in training for the motor trade during the early 1930s and the proposals of SIMT to the Commission on Technical Education did not progress further at that stage. Motor Garage Work was one of the six trades for which the Commission recommended that apprenticeship committees should, in the first instance, be constituted, when its proposed Apprenticeship Act was promulgated. As has already been pointed out, for a number of reasons none of the six committees was ever established under the 1931 Act. The committee proposed to the Commission by SIMT provided for employer and educational representation only, and, without trade union involvement, would not have satisfied the requirements for the designation of the trade under the 1931 Act. In 1936, however, the Department invited applications, from persons with two years' trade experience, for scholarships for the training of motor engineering instructors and a number of other trades. As a result, sixteen scholarships were awarded in Motor Garage Work and a course was conducted in Ringsend Technical School from January to July, 1937. The scholarship winners came from eight different counties and the course, no

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doubt, helped to alleviate the shortage of trade teachers and facilitated the provision of suitable courses for motor apprentices in a number of VECs throughout the country.(36)

#### **A New Scheme Proposed:**

The SIMT proposal, however, surfaced again in 1941, when, following a series of conferences between representatives of the Society and the Department, (again there was no trade union involvement), a scheme was prepared for the recruitment and training of garage mechanics. The proposals, 'which are to be put into force as soon as conditions warrant', (37) - it was the period of the 'Emergency' in Ireland - were outlined under three main headings:

- (i) Recruitment.
- (ii) Training during Apprenticeship.
- (iii) Completion of Apprenticeship.

Four conditions were specified in relation to recruitment:

candidates for apprenticeships in the trade would be accepted only if they had passed the prescribed examinations

these examinations would be conducted under the auspices of the Department, in the technical schools, in June each year, the subjects being metalwork or woodwork, mechanical drawing, mathematics and general technical knowledge. The pass mark was 50% of the total in each subject

a candidate had to have attended an approved course of instruction for at least one year. The course had to consist of not less than 800 hours instruction in technical and general subjects including six hours manual training, three hours science, two hours mechanical drawing and four hours mathematics per week

a candidate would not normally be accepted for training if more than 17 years of age.

In relation to training during apprenticeship, six conditions were laid down:

the apprenticeship period was five years or such longer period as was required to become adequately qualified

the apprentice had to present himself for the Group Trades Certificate (Junior Stage) at the end of his second year

if an apprentice failed to secure the Junior Trades Certificate by the end of his third year his apprenticeship would be terminated

apprentices had to attend, during apprenticeship, a suitable course of instruction in a technical school if such course was available

if the course was partly a day and partly an evening one, the apprentice could attend during working hours for up to four hours weekly without loss of pay

an apprentice had to present himself for the Group Trades Certificate (Senior Stage) at the end of his fourth year.

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For completion of apprenticeship, there were two conditions:

an apprentice who failed to secure the Senior Trades Certificate at the end of his fifth year, would not be recognised by the Society as an approved mechanic

an apprentice, who in addition to obtaining the Senior Trades Certificate, also obtained the Department's Intermediate Stage Technological Certificate, would receive the special diploma of the Society.

#### **Register of Candidates for Apprenticeships:**

In the 1942/43 school year, the Society prepared two circulars in connection with the scheme, 'How to become an Approved Mechanic' and 'Syllabuses for Apprenticeship Registration Examinations' and circulated these to all technical schools with an announcement that the first registration examination would be held in June, 1944.(38) It was intended that employer members of the Society would, in future, recruit their apprentices only from the register of students who had qualified in these examinations. Probably because of difficulties resulting from the 'Emergency' there was little activity to report for the school years 1943/44 and 1944/45. However, the Department of Education Report for 1946/47 referred to the SIMT scheme, which involved part-time day release courses, as follows :

The special course for motor garage apprentices, as approved by the Irish Motor Traders Ltd., was held in all the County Boroughs, and in many urban centres where the requisite engineering facilities were available. In Co. Sligo apprentices in centres within a twelve miles radius

of the town of Sligo attend classes in the Sligo Technical School on one day each week.(39)

In the 1946/47 session also, the Department introduced, for the first time, the special examination for the award of the Day Certificate in Manual Training and this was used by members of SIMT to select, from the list of successful candidates, 123 boys to commence apprenticeships in 1947 and in succeeding years. In fact, the concept of a panel of school-leavers qualified for entry to apprenticeships was adopted by an Cheard Chomhairle but later fell into disuse due to operational and control difficulties. The SIMT scheme, however, continued as planned with an increasing measure of success, the Society maintaining its own Register of Apprentices and Approved Motor Mechanics.

#### **The SIMT Scheme and An Cheard Chomhairle:**

With the establishment of an Cheard Chomhairle in April, 1960, there were early discussions between J.A. Agnew, Chairman of An Chomhairle and Leo Crawford of ICTU, at which the question of trade union involvement in the SIMT scheme arose, on the grounds that there would have to be joint control of any statutory apprenticeship system. When this matter was discussed by Mr. Agnew with Mr. Charles Warren, the SIMT representative on An Chomhairle, the latter did not see this as a problem, stating that the main difficulty was not trade union involvement as such but the large number of unions representing workers in the trade. The strategy adopted by an Chomhairle in implementing the 1959 Act was 'to pick out the trades which were fairly progressive and examine them first under the Act'. In the case of motor apprentices, the SIMT scheme was, in effect, a ready-made one and the motor trade was one of the first to be examined under the Act. This examination was

completed in March, 1962, and it showed that there were 2,279 apprentices in the trade with an annual intake of between 400 and 500. Following this examination, the trade of motor mechanic was formally designated and, in 1963, a National Apprenticeship Committee was established. The first Apprenticeship Rules to be put into place, on 9th. April 1963, were those for the trade of motor mechanic. The SIMT scheme, which began in 1945, ended when its Register of Apprentices was taken over by An Cheard Chomhairle.

**An Assessment:**

The SIMT apprenticeship scheme is of interest in that it represented the nearest approach in Ireland to the 'dual system' of the continental Chambers of Commerce. (The Joint Industrial Council for the Electrical Industry had somewhat similiar arrangements but included employers and trade unions and was established under legislation). An employers' voluntary trade organisation, with a nationwide membership, registered as a limited company, organised and operated, through its members, an effective national apprenticeship system for the motor trade. This was designed to meet not only its own needs for a skilled workforce, but to ensure that its apprentices were properly selected and trained and educated to recognised standards. It was achieved on a voluntary basis, outside the ambit of industrial relations, without recourse to the legalities of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act, in consultation with the educational authorities, and using the facilities provided by the VECs under the 1930 Vocational Education Act. It was a model, based on employers' involvement, commitment and 'ownership', which might, perhaps, have been retained and developed further.

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## 6. Apprenticeship in Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE)

### Origins:

Prior to the establishment of CIE in 1945, apprenticeship schemes existed in the Great Southern Railways (GSR), the Great Northern Railways (GNR) and in the Dublin United Tramway Company (DUTC). They were based very much on the traditional patterns of recruitment and training on-the-job. In the case of the GSR, where apprenticeship was the responsibility of the Chief Mechanical Engineer's department, all trades with the exception of those of fitter and turner were 'closed' to those who were not sons of employees. In the case of fitting and turning, 50% of the vacancies were allotted to sons of employees and 50% to 'outsiders'. These latter paid a fee of £70 while sons of regular employees paid £5. Selection was in the form of a lottery by drawing a slip of paper bearing the name of the applicant. There was no progressive system of training laid down; the apprentice learned his trade from the craftsman in the workplace. Attendance at technical school night classes was a matter for the apprentice himself. No effort was made to coordinate the training with the school curriculum. The period to be served was seven years, at the end of which the apprentice was recognised as a tradesman.

### 'Gentlemen' Apprentices:

An interesting feature, common to both the GSR and the GNR, was the concept of the 'pupil apprentice' who was being trained for a management position. This concept had evolved from the introduction of the factory system and the two-tier industrial society, with the craftsman at one level and the management group at a higher level. These 'gentlemen apprentices' - so called by the ordinary apprentices - in some cases had taken a

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university degree before joining the organisation. They invariably paid a fee but received no wages and, normally, spent a period of three or four years as a 'premium pupil', before obtaining a position of responsibility in the firm.(40) Their training consisted in being rotated for six-monthly periods around the various workshops and undergoing technological/technician level education on a day release basis in Bolton St. College. In general, trade unions were opposed to premium apprentices, maintaining that they were given preferential treatment, particularly in relation to rotation between the various sections of the workshops, compared to the normal apprentice.

#### **Developments with Coras Iompair Eireann:**

With the establishment of CIE in 1945, a new apprentice training scheme was developed in consultation with the heads of CIE's engineering sections, the Technical Instruction Branch of the Department of Education, the City of Dublin VEC and the trade unions. The 'drawing by lot' selection system was replaced by a selection board of representatives of the Department, the trade unions (as observers only at this stage) and CIE. The ability of the applicant would, in future, be the determining factor in recruitment. The minimum educational standards were set at Day Group or Intermediate Certificate levels. Apprentices were required to attend technical school on one day a week, without loss of pay, and also classes on at least two evenings per week. They had to take the appropriate Department examinations in their trade subjects during training. Day release attendance was introduced on a phased basis over a five year period to ensure that 'the various groups were uniform in educational status' and to lessen the impact on the school system and on the operations in the workplace. The scheme began in September, 1945, and by



September, 1949, all apprentices were attending day release classes. The apprenticeship period at this time had been reduced to five years.

During the release courses in the first two years, the apprentice's aptitude for technological training was assessed. At the end of this period, he sat for the elementary technological examination of the Department and his performance determined whether he would proceed to a higher technological course or continue his trade instruction. Those who qualified were released for two days per week for the higher courses supplemented with attendance at compulsory evening classes. This higher technological 'stream' was recognised as an avenue of preparation for Graduate and Associate Membership of a number of engineering institutions. Some apprentices entered for the Joint Common Preliminary Examinations of these bodies and, if successful, could proceed, over the remaining three years of their apprenticeship, to study for Part 1 of the examinations of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. Alternatively, they could take the technological examinations of the Department of Education or of the City and Guilds, both of which led to technician qualifications. An exceptional apprentice, anxious to obtain experience in the drawing office or to become a trainee draughtsman, could be facilitated. This experience would be of considerable benefit to an apprentice planning to take the examinations of a professional institution.

All apprentices were expected to obtain the Junior Trade Certificate at the end of their second year. Those who did not qualify for the technological course continued their craft training and could sit the Senior Trade examination at the end of their fourth year but, in any case, were expected to have passed it by the end of their fifth year. This group were also encouraged to take the technological examinations of the

Department. As an additional incentive, CIE instituted an awards system and an annual prizegiving with monetary awards for achievement in the Department's examinations.

In its Report for the schoolyear 1946/47, the Department of Education commented:

The important scheme for the training of railway apprentices adopted by Coras Iompair Eireann and by the Great Northern Railway has been in operation during session 1946-47 in Dublin, Cork, Limerick Waterford, Galway, Dundalk, Ballina, Tralee and Sligo, and over 150 CIE and more than 20 GNR apprentices were released to attend day-time instruction.(41)

The railway apprenticeship system as outlined above was reviewed in 1951, and was considered to be satisfactory with no changes being considered necessary. However, it was agreed that the trade union representative should, in future, be a full member of the selection board instead of having observer status only.

#### **Apprentice Scholarships:**

In 1959, in discussions between Mr. L. Collins, Deputy Chief Engineer, CIE and Mr. J. D. Barry, vice-Principal, Technical Institute, Bolton St., a number of changes were proposed.(42) It was agreed that the existing scheme provided adequate training for craft apprentices and was almost adequate for technician level. However, it was considered that the outstanding apprentice, after arriving at technological status, was left incompletely trained at the end of his apprenticeship. CIE was anxious that apprentices of exceptional merit should have the opportunity to complete a course with a view to

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qualifying for vacancies as engineers and had under consideration the introduction of an Engineering Apprenticeship as distinct from a Craft Apprenticeship. This 'would be similar to the Premium Pupil Schemes operated by the Railway in the past', and would provide technicians and technologists. Mr. Barry suggested, instead, the award of a number of scholarships each year to enable exceptional apprentices to follow a four year course at Bolton St., which, coupled with training in CIE, would qualify them as Associate Members of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Concern was also expressed that the selection procedure was not satisfactory and that the educational standard was too low, as compared with that required by the ESB and SIMT. It was agreed that an Apprentice Supervisor was needed to improve liaison arrangements with the technical schools.

As a result of these discussions, an Apprentice Supervisor was appointed and was given as his first task:

to carry out a complete survey of the present CIE scheme and schemes operated by other organisations, and in conjunction with the Technical Institutes, both Bolton Street and Kevin Street, formulate proposals for an improved scheme.(43)

The Engineering Scholarship Scheme for apprentices was introduced in 1963 and two scholarships are provided annually to enable suitable craft apprentices to obtain a professional qualification in engineering. They are tenable in the Faculty of Engineering of an Irish University or in a College of Technology with an approved full-time day course in engineering. Interestingly, a recipient of a scholarship was one of the six girl apprentices recruited by CIE. In 1961, with the advent of decentralisation in CIE, responsibility for the apprenticeship scheme was transferred from the Personnel

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Department to that of the Chief Mechanical Engineer (Rail) at Inchicore. To improve selection, aptitude testing by the Vocational Guidance Unit of the City of Dublin VEC was introduced in 1963. In another development during the late 1960s, the system of day-release was replaced by block-release on the basis of five days per week for eleven weeks in each year.

#### **The AnCO/CIE Apprentice Training Centre:**

CIE initiated a major review of its apprentice training during the mid-1960s and by August, 1967, had prepared a document, Proposal to Establish an Apprentice Training Centre for Coras Iompair Eireann at Inchicore, Dublin. Studies of the apprenticeship and training systems in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Holland and Spain had been undertaken and in the Introduction to the document it was stated:

In the majority of countries of Europe traditional systems of apprenticeship are giving way to more scientific methods of training. By applying techniques of accelerated training it has been found possible to reduce the period of apprenticeship while still maintaining a high level of craft skill. One obvious advantage of employing systematic training methods is that it gives a greater degree of control over the quality of instruction - it allows close regulation of what is taught and how it is taught.(44)

The essence of the proposal was to remove apprentice training from its traditional location on the shop floor to a training centre specially designed for this purpose. By so doing, CIE hoped to contribute to the development of apprenticeship in Ireland and this, in fact, it did. The new Industrial Training Authority (AnCO) had just been established and at a meeting on

30th. November, 1967, between the Director of AnCO and the Assistant General Manager (Engineering) of CIE, to discuss the establishment of the Centre and the question of grants from the Training Authority, there was substantial agreement that the new Centre would be a joint venture.(45) The Centre would be known as the AnCO/CIE Training Centre, and it would be a group centre to which outside employers could send their apprentices. AnCO would be allotted a total of 54 places for this purpose and CIE would have 114. CIE would provide the building while AnCO would be responsible for the equipment. In addition, AnCO would contribute to the operating costs of the 54 apprentice training places which it had been allotted. CIE would staff and manage the Centre and there would be a joint AnCO/CIE Committee to oversee its operation. A formal agreement for an initial period of six years was signed. This Centre was to become, in effect, a pilot scheme in the off-the-job industrial training of apprentices and the success of its operation was one of the deciding factors in the decision taken by the AnCO Council, in 1976, to introduce off-the-job training for all apprentices as part of the New Apprenticeship.

There was capacity in the Centre for 168 apprentices, with an annual intake of 56 - 18 for AnCO and 38 for CIE. In addition to the training workshops, there were classrooms, a library, an assembly hall and administrative offices in the purpose-built Centre. Five trades were provided for: electrician; fitter/turner; metal fabricator; sheetmetal worker and motor mechanic. The Centre was run on industrial lines, providing 40 hours instruction per week of which 60% was practical and 40% related craft theory. Courses in character formation and personal development were also provided. An interesting feature of the programme was that, initially, the first three years of each apprenticeship were to be off-the-job followed by two years supervised improvership on the shop floor. The initial six months training consisted of a common basic engineering

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course after which trade specialisation took place. The three year off-the-job pattern continued for CIE apprentices until 1975, when it was reduced to one year. However, in the case of the AnCO sponsored apprentices, it became evident after the first intake that there was extreme difficulty in placing third year apprentices in employment, partly because of the level of their wages, but also because of their lack of shop-floor experience. Accordingly, a one year off-the-job pattern was introduced thereafter. Educational release took the form of block release for one month in every three to either Bolton St. or Kevin St. College, in the first three years of apprenticeship. An instructor/apprentice ratio of 1 to 10 was provided for, the instructor positions being filled by internal recruitment from qualified craftsmen, all instructors receiving training in the techniques of instruction. AnCO provided an accommodation subsidy for apprentices who had to live away from home, thus enabling apprentices from rural areas to receive training.

The establishment of the Training Centre involved discussions with the unions in CIE and also with the educational authorities. The unions 'welcomed, at least mildly, the idea of 'off-the-job' training but ... regarded the reduction of the apprenticeship period from 5 to 3 years as a major issue'.(46) They foresaw difficulties when CIE-trained apprentices would look for employment in firms where a five year period applied. The question of the lack of assistance for craftsmen if apprentices were no longer being trained on the shop-floor was also raised. A copy of the proposal to build an Apprentice Centre was sent to the Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, who welcomed the idea with the comment 'ceim ar aghaidh e seo i gcursai oiliuna'.(47) However, it was also considered important in the Department that the proposal should specify:

It is not the intention to duplicate the facilities offered by the Technical Colleges. Classes in related instruction, e.g. basic science, applied mathematics, general studies, would be arranged on a block-release basis in the schools.

The Centre was officially opened by the Minister for Labour, Mr. Joseph Brennan, on 23rd March, 1970. He referred in his address to the review of apprenticeship which had been initiated by AnCO and commented:

I have no doubt that useful experience will be gained from this new AnCO/CIE joint venture and from the other AnCO Centres, which will aid in achieving the best form of apprentice training.(48)

**An Assessment:**

In the period since 1945, CIE has transformed the training of its apprentices from a traditional 'closed shop' format to a modern professional system. In so doing, it has made a significant contribution to the training of craftsmen in Ireland and its apprentices have won many awards in both the National and International Competitions. The number trained in its Training Centre, since it was established in 1969, is approaching 2000. The fact that, at present, there are only 20 in training there is a matter for regret and, indeed, for action in view of the current youth unemployment situation. Perhaps, however, the greatest contribution made by CIE was to demonstrate the flexibility of a well structured apprenticeship system in providing for training needs other than those of the craftsman. In association with the technical education sector, it developed an imaginative and adaptable programme to train, not only its craftsmen, but also technicians, technologists and

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professional engineers and in so doing established a built-in 'ladder to higher levels' for its apprentices.

### 7. The Army Apprentice School.

#### Introduction:

The first stage in the demobilisation of the Army, built up during the 'Emergency', began in November, 1945, and continued in stages until early 1947.(49) By March, 1948, the Defence Forces were very much under strength and there was a serious shortage of army 'technicians' such as fitters, electricians, motor, radio and radar mechanics. Even the Air Corps, with its own apprenticeship programme, was losing its technical staff to civilian employment through discharge by purchase. In the Supply and Transport Corps, for example, there were very few soldier motor mechanics, completely insufficient to service the Army fleet. The shortfall was made up by employing civilian fitters, most of them ex-Emergency soldiers, in the Base Workshops and the Garrison Companies of the Corps. These civilians were generally not available for operational duties in the field. In the early 1950s, the Supply and Transport Corps School in the Curragh began a series of motor transport fitters' courses to redress the situation. These were of two years duration, followed a comprehensive training syllabus which included an input by a VEC metalwork teacher, with the practical work being undertaken in the School workshops, and instruction in theory being provided by army technical officers. Twelve soldiers were catered for on each course, they were qualified drivers who had a number of years of army service and were selected by their Commanding Officers. At the end of the course they were tested and graded as motor transport fitters, some, in fact, also qualifying in Department



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of Education elementary examinations. In all six courses were run and the fitters trained on them filled an essential need - especially when Army troops went on active service for the first time to the Congo in 1960 - until more permanent arrangements were made.

**Naas Army Apprentice School:**

Meantime, in 1947, at a meeting of the General Staff presided over by Lt. Gen. D. McKenna, who had been Chief of Staff since 1940, it was decided to investigate the possibility of establishing a separate school to train Army apprentices. The intention appears to have been to extend the successful Air Corps Boy Mechanics scheme to the Signals, Ordnance, Engineer and Supply and Transport Corps. A committee was set up under the chairmanship of Col. Liam Archer and submitted its report to the Minister for Defence in 1948 (50). The report recommended the establishment of an Army Apprentice School in Devoy Bks. Naas. The training programme was to consist of a three year full-time course with a further period of on-the-job training in the Corps to which the apprentice was posted. As happened with the Air Corps scheme, discussions were held with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to ensure that apprentices trained in the School would be recognised by the trade unions on completion of their Army service. The School opened in October, 1956, when the first platoon of apprentices, recruited following a nation-wide selection process, began their courses. In the initial stages it was decided to confine training to basic fitting (armament and motor), carpentry and the electrical trade. In 1961, courses for radio mechanics were added, in response to the demands of the Signal Corps for technicians to service radio and radar equipment, which was becoming increasingly sophisticated. All apprentices, other

than those in radio and radar (which is not a designated trade) were registered with An Cheard Chomhairle and later with AnCO.

The normal mix of trade instruction and military training is undertaken in the Apprentice School during the three year off-the-job course, three and a half days per week being allotted to trade training, one day to military training, and a half day to recreational training. As with the Air Corps, the Army Apprentice School is a residential one, training taking place from nine to five with a two hour study period on three evenings per week. The first year consists of a common basic course, with specialisation from the second year onwards. The practical and theoretical instruction follows the Junior and Senior Trade syllabi of the Department of Education, with the radio and radar mechanics using that of the City and Guilds of London Institute. The appropriate Junior and Senior examinations are taken during the three year course and excellent results are achieved. The trade instruction is provided by thirteen vocational teachers, supplied by the Co. Kildare VEC, and four Army instructors. Intensive military training takes place in the Glen of Imaal at the end of the school year thus ensuring that on completion of the course, the apprentice is not only skilled in a trade, but is also a trained soldier. Following the three year period in the School, the apprentice is posted to an operational unit to receive on-the-job practice and complete the final apprenticeship year. Some Naval Service apprentices receive their basic general training at Naas, before transfer to the Naval Service Technical Training Bay at Haulbowline, where they join other apprentices, recruited directly by the Naval Service, for plant familiarisation training and seagoing experience. These direct apprenticeships for Engine Room and Electrical Artificers and Shipwrights are normally awarded to serving experienced naval service personnel. After selection, these undergo first year off-the-job training in FAS Training

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Centres, and attend Regional Colleges for block release courses in the subsequent years of their apprenticeships.(51)

In the thirty-seven years since it was established in 1956, the Army Apprentice School, which recruits a new class each year, has trained some 1,650 apprentices and has made a significant contribution to the provision of skilled personnel, not only for the Defence Forces, but also for the national pool. The training has been of a very high standard as evidenced by results obtained in Departmental and City and Guilds examinations and in national competitions. A high proportion of those who passed through the School have gone on to become non-commissioned and commissioned officers in the Defence Forces. The first AnCO/Army third level Scholarship was awarded to an apprentice from the School, who went on to achieve first place on his third-level course and was later commissioned as an officer. Many have seen overseas service with the United Nations forces. The School, however, suffered from the disadvantage that, unlike that of the Air Corps, it had a separate location and was not part of an operational unit which could provide the real working environment which can contribute so much to the training of an apprentice. (There have been suggestions that the original decision to locate the School in Naas resulted from political pressure.) The three year off-the-job period, while it ensured excellent standards in examinations, tended, perhaps, to make the training too institutionalised. It is of interest that both CIE and AnCO, having commenced with a three years period off-the-job in the AnCO/CIE Centre, quickly reverted to a one year period after an initial evaluation. However, at present a Board of Officers, convened by the Chief of Staff, is reviewing the operation of the School and assessing the future technical skills needs of the Defence Forces. The broader issues referred to may be addressed as part of this review.

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## 8. The Farm Apprenticeship Scheme.

### Introduction:

Although the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme commenced on 13th. April, 1964, its origins go back to the early 1940s when Macra na Feirme was founded. At that stage what was under discussion was a 'farming ladder', a means of graduating from an apprenticeship to farm ownership. The idea really took shape, however, in late 1956, when the newly appointed CEO of the Co, Monaghan VEC., Dr. Bob O'Connor, met with the Rev. Dr. Dan Duffy, President of St. Patricks Agricultural College in Monaghan, who was also a delegate to the National Executive of Macra na Feirme. Dr. Duffy was concerned for the future of the students in his College, who, although they were receiving an agricultural education, had very little chance of becoming farmers. Indeed, very few had family farms to go back to. At the meeting it was suggested that one way of dealing with the problem would be to develop a scheme whereby qualified farm apprentices would become eligible for land through the Land Commission or from some other source.(52) It was felt that the idea of acquiring land at the end of an apprenticeship was the element that had been missing in all previous discussions.

The idea was discussed at a meeting of the National Executive of Macra in December, 1956, and a more detailed submission was requested. This was prepared, and in March, 1957, a paper, Apprenticeship and Land Settlement Scheme for Young Farmers, was presented to the National Executive. Central to the proposal was that a Land Settlement Agency should be established to acquire 50 suitable farms each year for sale to qualified apprentices, the Agency also being responsible for arranging credit facilities and grants. A final report was submitted to the Macra Executive in August, 1957, and a joint steering committee involving Macra, NFA, ICA, IAOA, VTA and

some individuals was formed. This Committee completed the drawing up of the scheme and it was launched at a meeting of Tuairim, in Killiney, on 14/15 December, 1957. General M. J. Costello, former General Manager Irish Sugar Company, presided, and also in attendance was the Minister for Lands, Mr. Erskine Childers.(53) After the launch of the scheme, the Committee had a number of meetings to discuss how money could be got to acquire land but were warned by Mr. Childers:

that it would be very difficult for the Commission to give land to landless men no matter how well trained; that already there were objections coming from Western TDs. The latter wanted any land available used for the relief of congestion among small farmers.(54)

Members of the Committee also met the then Taoiseach, Mr. de Valera, and were somewhat disappointed for 'de Valera told us all about his young days on a farm in Co. Limerick but hardly listened at all to what we had to say'.(55) He did, however, give the scheme his support and probably influenced Sean Lemass who, when he became Taoiseach, met a deputation from the Committee in 1960, pushed the scheme through 'an unwilling Civil Service' and established an Inter-departmental Advisory Committee to examine it and report to him. The question of land settlement, however, caused many delays and eventually, in late 1963, agreement was reached to proceed with the farm management training scheme without the land settlement element.(56) This was dropped mainly because of objections from the rural TDs.

#### **The Farm Apprenticeship Board:**

The original steering Committee had its final meeting in late 1963, and handed over to a new Body Corporate, The Farm Apprenticeship Board, which held its first meeting in April,

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1964. No Government finance was provided for the Board in its early days (it is now largely financed by the State) and its start-up costs were met by grants totalling £800, from Macra na Feirme and the National Farmers Association. Until 1967, when it got its first administrative grant from the Government, the Board depended on the facilities and staff of Macra na Feirme. Thus began a system of apprenticeship to farming using the traditional concept of master and apprentice. Commenting on the scheme on the occasion of its 21st. Year Celebrations, in 1985, the then Minister for Agriculture, Mr Austin Deasy, said:

Perhaps they were inspired by the ancient Gaelic system of fosterage where a chieftain would send his son to spend a span of years with a distant counterpart learning the crafts required for his future life.(57)

At present the Board has two programmes, the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme and the Trainee Farmer Scheme. Both involve a structured programme of education, training and work experience on selected farms, with an assessment system leading to certification. The Apprenticeship programme, introduced in 1964, is of three years duration, all of which is spent on host farms, known as Master Farms, with three different registered Master Farmers. It is designed to train young persons for a farming career and, specifically, for a position as a farm manager. The training is in two phases: at the end of the second year the apprentice can qualify for the Certificate in Farm Husbandry and, at the end of the third year, for the Certificate in Farm Management. The Trainee programme, on the other hand, was introduced in 1972 and is aimed at persons who will inherit a farm, but who are unable to spend the three years needed for a full apprenticeship programme away from their home farm. Again, this is a three year programme, the trainee spending the first year on a host farm with a Master Farmer and the second and third years on the home farm, where

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the training is supervised by the Board's advisory staff. On successful completion of the programme, the Trainee Farmer Certificate is awarded.

The Board maintains a register of some three hundred and sixty Master Farmers and can provide training places for a combined total of three hundred and fifty apprentices and trainees per annum. The Master Farmers, who pay an annual registration fee of £35, are assessed and monitored by the Board's supervisory staff. A recent development has been the introduction of a comprehensive training programme for Masters, originally funded by the Youth Employment Agency. In recent years, the spouses of Masters have been included on the Masters Training programme in consideration of their role in the economy of the family farm and in the welfare of the apprentices accommodated in their homes. The Masters have their own central committee, which elects two members to the Farm Apprenticeship Board, and there are also ten Masters groups at area level. The Board has produced its own training material for use by pupils and masters, including a Farm Training Manual, Farm Management Journal, Course Curriculum and Syllabus, Farm Planning and Record Sheets and the ACOT Farm Management Account Book. Day release courses in Teagasc Training Centres and residential block release to agricultural colleges are organised each year. Provision is also made for project work and for visits to special farming demonstrations and agricultural shows. While in training the apprentices and trainees (during the first year) have the same pay and conditions of service as those specified for agricultural workers.

The entry requirements for apprentices are that they must be at least seventeen years of age; have grade D in Mathematics, English or Irish and one other subject in the Group Certificate or equivalent, or a higher attainment; have a Pass Certificate in Agricultural Examinations at the end of an Agricultural

College course or have been successful on a Certificate in Farming programme. In the case of a trainee, the entry requirements are the same, except that he or she must be a farm inheritor and that some alternatives to the Agricultural College course are acceptable. All applicants are assessed for suitability at an interview conducted by the Board. In 1991, the Board introduced, as an additional aid to selection, a special three day residential pre-registration course aimed at ensuring that all applicants were fully briefed and at eliminating those least interested. As will be seen later, the Racing Apprentice Centre of Education (RACE) had developed a somewhat similar process to aid in selection and to reduce drop-outs. The 1991 Annual Report expressed some concern at a fall-off in the numbers availing of the programmes. The total of first year apprentices and trainee farmers had dropped from 159 in 1990, to 114 in 1991, while the overall numbers in the combined schemes had dropped from 327 to 279. This decline was attributed to a downturn in farm incomes. The Board also had difficulty in placing some applicants, due to a reduction in the number of Masters willing to take apprentices, and a number of applicants remained unplaced at the end of 1991. The Board has initiated a review of the operation of its schemes and has introduced a number of new initiatives. It is currently examining some proposals to improve its programmes, one of which is a scheme for the placement of apprentices with farmers in Brittany for a three month training period. It is also investigating the 'transparency' of its qualifications with those of other EC countries.

Both the Farm Apprenticeship and the Trainee Farmer Schemes have made a considerable impact in equipping young farmers and farm managers to cope with the many changes which have taken place in farming since Ireland's entry to the EC and the development of the Common Agricultural Policy. An observation made by Brendan Sheedy, Secretary to the Apprenticeship Board



since its inception in 1964, is worth noting. Referring to the fact that, in the early days of the Board's operations, the majority of those taking the courses did not have farms to return to, he states:

Many of these young men who saw no prospect of ever owning land are now farming for themselves.(58)

For some at least, the original dream of the founders had come true.

## **9. The Racing Apprentice Centre of Education (RACE).**

### **The Jockey Apprentice Scheme.**

#### **Social Origins:**

The Racing Apprentice Centre of Education (RACE) and its Jockey Apprentice Scheme had social origins. In 1972, a group of individuals in the Kildare/Newbridge/Naas area, consisting mainly of well known people associated with the horse racing industry and a number of teachers, formed the Apprentice Jockeys' Educational and Welfare Trust. The group was concerned with the welfare and social conditions of young people coming to join racing stables on the Curragh. These were usually young boys, known as stable lads, with little education or experience, who received practically no training and whose living conditions and recreational outlets left a lot to be desired. The Trust considered that the first requirement was for properly supervised hostel accommodation which would provide a formative and homely atmosphere. The Trust raised £30,000 in private subscriptions, the Turf Club giving £5,000 and the Racing Board £10,000. A large old house on the edge of

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the Curragh near Kildare town, Curragh House, and 2½ acres of land, the property of the National Stud, were given by the Department of Agriculture.

The Centre opened its doors in September, 1973, under the direction of Mr. Derek O'Sullivan. In its first year, through advertisements in the daily press, it recruited ten young boys seeking entry to racing establishments. In the initial stages, these were sent to work full-time with racing trainers and became apprentice jockeys. After work, they returned to Curragh House where they were accommodated. Educational classes were conducted at night time, the teachers being provided by the Co. Kildare VEC, while some private individuals gave instruction in subjects related to the horse industry. The intention was that the apprentices would spend their first two years in the hostel, by which time they would have become more mature and have established themselves with their trainers. This first attempt was not successful as only two of the seventeen who came to the Centre remained there for the two years. 'The others left through homesickness or were asked to leave because they would not take the discipline'.(59) It was considered that the cause of the problem was the absence of a proper selection procedure. In 1974, a Careers leaflet was prepared by the Centre, Guidance Counsellors in schools throughout the country were enlisted to help with selection and applicants were invited for a two-week residential trial period, which was organised in cooperation with the National Stud. This selection procedure proved to be very successful and has been retained to the present time. It was recognised, at an early stage, that the most effective way of helping young persons coming to the Centre was to provide them with a sound professional training and education, which would enhance their job prospects within the horse industry.

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**Development of a Training Centre:**

Systematic professional training began in 1974, when the Department of Defence, through the Army Equitation School, agreed to provide a four week riding course in the Curragh Camp. This training, which was later extended to eight weeks, resulted from a request from trainers that apprentices should have some initial training before being sent to the stables. It is the year 1977, however, which is regarded as the watershed when the Centre evolved from being a hostel into a school/training centre. In that year, at the instigation of the then Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave, discussions on the operation of the Centre took place between AnCO and RACE. As a result, the annual intake was increased to sixteen, half of whom were sponsored by AnCO. Apprentices in their first year became employees of the Centre and were paid an appropriate training allowance. All were accommodated in the Centre, which received an accommodation subsidy as well as a training fee from AnCO, in respect of its sponsored apprentices. A new training curriculum was designed with AnCO assistance and an instruction manual for apprentice jockeys was developed by RACE. (This was later translated into Japanese and Chinese, and the section on riding instruction into French, for use in apprentice schools in Japan, Hong Kong and France respectively). The first year programme begins with the eight weeks riding course, provided by the Army Equitation School at the Curragh. The apprentices are then allocated to trainers for practical work experience in the stables each morning, and trainers are expected to make a contribution to RACE for the work done. In the afternoons, the apprentices attend classes which include English, Stable Management/Veterinary Science, Physical Education, Rules of Racing and Racing Tactics.

At the end of their first year, the apprentices leave the Centre to become full-time employees of the trainers with whom they received their practical work experience, and are usually apprenticed to them. Those who fail to make the grade as jockeys find employment as stable lads, head lads and stud grooms and the Centre is proud of its 100% placement record, with 78% of its former trainees still employed in the industry. Since it started operations in 1973, almost 275 trainees have completed courses in RACE. It now recruits 26 apprentices annually, half of whom are now sponsored by FAS, and maintains that it could increase its intake to forty per year and still place them all, as well as considerably reducing its per capita costs, if the necessary additional funding were available. From its inception, RACE has been conscious of the international dimension of the horse industry and has developed many contacts overseas. It operates an apprentice exchange programme with France and Hong Kong and many of its ex-pupils are working and riding in India, Japan, the United States, Germany and England. Two graduates of the Centre have been Apprentice Champions in Ireland and a further two have won European Apprentice Championships.

RACE has just completed a new purpose-built Training Centre, with the aid of donations received from a number of stud farms. The old Curragh House and the prefabs added over the years have been replaced by a modern building, with new accommodation for its first year apprentices and for senior apprentices, (a facility long requested by trainers), classrooms, canteen, recreational facilities and office accommodation. This is the first stage in the development of a National Equine Educational Institute which will cater for the training and social needs of young people working in the horse industry. The second stage will provide for a sports centre with swimming pool, (built as a joint venture with the local community), and an equestrian centre with an indoor riding school and stables. The cost of

the entire development is estimated at £1.1 million, most of it being donated by the horse industry. It is planned to revive the scheme for the training of apprentice farriers, which Bord na gCapall had initiated, in 1976, in association with AnCO and the National Stud. This programme operated on somewhat similiar lines to the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme - with the students being apprenticed to selected Master Farriers. It had helped to revive a disappearing trade, while providing a pool of qualified farriers until it was discontinued when Bord na gCapall was wound up, in 1987.

RACE freely acknowledges that the success of its operations has depended on cooperation and community effort involving Departments of State, semi-State bodies, the Turf Club, the Racing Board, the National Stud, the European Social Fund, the Co. Kildare VEC, the Army Equitation School and many individuals. But the small concerned group who, in 1972, identified a simple social need and took action to meet it, and the Director of the project, who had the vision and energy to develop and expand a basic hostel into a high-class modern education and training facility, are the ones mainly to be congratulated on this achievement.

#### 10. Comments.

All the foregoing special apprenticeship schemes have been very successful and have provided training to high standards. With the exception of that of the SIMT, which was taken over by An Cheard Chomhairle, and the Farrier Apprenticeship scheme which ended with Bord na gCapall, all are still in operation and have adapted successfully to new developments and rapidly changing technologies. They were established to fulfil needs, mainly economic, as with the Sugar Company and the ESB, but, in some cases, to meet social needs, for instance the Farm and Jockey

Apprenticeships. However, whether the need was economic or social, in all cases they had the involvement and full commitment of employers. When speaking in the Dail debate on the 1931 Apprenticeship Bill, Deputy Patrick McGilligan, Minister for Industry and Commerce, said:

In the end it will depend on the employer whether or not the scheme of apprenticeship will make good and how far it will make good.(60)

His judgment would seem to be vindicated by these apprenticeships. All the schemes were voluntary, they were initiated without recourse to legislation and, although the trade unions were consulted and gave their tacit approval, they developed outside the ambit of the industrial relations domain. Trade unions always supported good training; their main cause of concern was the numbers trained and the effect that this might have on the livelihood of their members. In all cases, the VECs were involved and provided both expertise and facilities and the Department of Education displayed considerable flexibility in reacting to the demands made on it by industry. A final factor, worthy of note, is the ability of the apprenticeship system, when properly structured and managed, to provide for the training of young persons for occupations as diverse as riding race horses and maintaining modern aircraft.

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- (59) Short History of RACE, 1986. p.1. (Kildare: RACE)
- (60) Dail Debates, Vol.38. cols. 411/412, 29 April, 1931.

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## Chapter Fifteen

### TRENDS IN APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING IN SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

#### **Introduction:**

This chapter sets out to give a general comparative overview of trends in apprenticeship training in a number of European countries to help give some international perspective to the detailed treatment of apprenticeship in Ireland. Because of its relevance to the current review of the Irish system, it is intended to deal in some detail with the German Dual system. An outline of an Eastern European model of an industry-based vocational school approach in the Czech and Slovak Republics, currently in the process of change, is also being included.

#### **Apprenticeship Models:**

The extent, pattern and importance of apprenticeship in European countries, as it evolved over the years, reflected each country's particular economic, social and cultural needs. It was the interaction of factors such as tradition, demographic structures, the availability of alternative institutional systems, and the state of development of the economy which determined how apprenticeship was organised. Although there are many similarities between the various systems adopted by different countries, there are two fairly distinct approaches to the training of a skilled workforce; one is represented by the traditional apprenticeship method, i.e. training within the firm, supplemented by an educational input, while the other takes place completely within the full-time school system. In those industrialised countries which still

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adhere to the core elements of traditional apprenticeship, broadly speaking, two models are identifiable. One has its origins in England and exists, mainly, in the six English speaking countries, viz Great Britain, Ireland, the United States, New Zealand, Canada and Australia. The other model is based on that which developed in continental European countries. Dr. Beatrice Rubens, in her Report, Apprenticeship in Foreign Countries, commissioned by the Department of Labour in the United States, and published in 1980, describes the difference between the two models as follows:

In essence, and with some oversimplification, apprenticeship in English-speaking countries is a privately controlled aspect of the industrial relations system in which trade unions, often organised on a craft basis, have a decisive influence on the number of apprentices, the form, content, length of training, the ratio of apprentices to journeymen, and apprentice hours and wages. By contrast, apprenticeship in the continental European countries is a public system in which collective bargaining has final jurisdiction only over apprentice wage levels and not even that in some countries.(1)

As this view suggests, in English speaking countries trade unions exercise a more powerful influence, and the State, employers and legislation have a less important role in apprenticeship than in the continental countries. In these latter, it tends to be seen as a part of the educational system as much as of the employment sector, with Departments of Education having the main administrative function, whereas, in the English-speaking countries, the employment aspect of apprenticeship is emphasised with Departments of Labour or of Employment having primary responsibility. In the English model, 'ownership', in the public perception, tended to reside with the trade unions, particularly the craft unions, whilst in the

continental model it rested with the public authorities, and with the employers through their associations such as the Chambers of Commerce, membership of which is compulsory for businesses.

In Ireland, following the abolition of the guild system in 1846 and the establishment of the trade union 'guilds' during the second half of the 19th. century, 'ownership' of the apprenticeship system, and indeed its very survival, rested mainly with the craft unions. While the Apprenticeship Acts of 1931 and 1959 and the Industrial Training Act of 1967 did set out to involve the State and the employers more positively in apprenticeship, through the setting up of joint councils and committees, 'ownership' was still perceived as being in the trade union domain. However, with the introduction of the New Apprenticeship in 1976, some of this was ceded to the State. Unlike their counterparts on the continent, employers in Ireland never developed the same interest in, or commitment to, apprenticeship and, generally, looked to the State to make provision for skilled manpower. There were exceptions, of course, and some excellent apprenticeship schemes were identified with employers. The nearest approach to the continental model to develop in Ireland was the motor mechanic apprenticeship scheme initiated by an employers' organisation - the Society of the Irish Motor Traders (SIMT) - following the 1931 Apprenticeship Act. This successful scheme was totally controlled by the Society, without trade union involvement, and was operated in association with the Vocational Education Committees until the establishment of An Cheard Chomhairle in 1959. The emphasis was on proper selection, education, training and standards rather than on the industrial relations issues of numbers, ratios, time to be served and wages, all of which tended to dominate the deliberations of the few Committees set up under the 1931 Act. The excellent apprenticeship schemes of semi-state bodies, such

as the E.S.B. and C.I.E., and of the Defence Forces were also identified with Management rather than trade unions. The inclusion of the FAS Review of Apprenticeship in the 1991 Programme for Economic and Social Progress, with the State, the trade unions and the employers committed to a national programme, coupled with the introduction of an apprenticeship levy on employers, may herald a new phase in the 'ownership' equation here.

Other differences between the two models identified by Dr. Rubens were that, in the 'English' version:

fewer occupations are apprenticeable and intake more limited and controlled, with responsibility for extending the range of apprenticeships resulting more from private rather than public decisions

less time devoted to formal off-the-job training and theory instruction, training standards more diverse and less well supervised

a longer apprenticeship period, drop-out and dismissal rates generally higher

a time-serving rather than a standards achieved approach to qualification on completion of apprenticeship

apprentice wage rates based on a percentage of the full craft rate, often as high as 90-95 percent in the later years of apprenticeship, compared with 50-60 percent in continental countries. (2)

In the 'Continental' model, therefore, the approach to apprenticeship tended to be more committed, more structured and more professional.

**European Apprenticeships - An Overview:**

Among the European countries, apprenticeship is strongest in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and, in these states, it is the main activity entered into by young persons on leaving school. In Austria, for instance, there are over 200 apprenticeable occupations, while in Germany, every year some 66% of all school-leavers enter one of the 380 officially recognised apprenticeships. These are available, in crafts, commercial skills, banking, baking, food, agriculture, sales and many other areas, forming the basis for more than 20,000 adult occupations. There are about 1.5 million apprentices in the German system at any one time, and it provides for almost all of the initial training of young people who do not go on to university or into the professions. In practice, in Germany, it appears that all young persons seeking an apprenticeship can get one in the skill of their choice and can secure employment afterwards. In 1988, when some 604,000 new apprentice training contracts were signed, there were almost 666,000 available training places for which the demand totalled 629,000, leaving over 37,000 unfilled.(3) In a report of a study visit to Germany in 1992, by a group from FAS, it was stated that some 120,000 apprentice places were unfilled in 1991, because of a shortage of applicants.(4) This report also indicated that there was concern at national level because of a growing trend among school-leavers towards academic study and university education, as these were seen to have a higher prestige, with enhanced earning capacity. In Switzerland, with a total population of 6.5 million, there are some 90,000 apprentices in 300 occupations, with approximately 70% of second level school-leavers entering this cohort each year. In these countries, then, apprenticeship is well regarded. Its extensive nature, covering so many occupations, means that most workers will have achieved their training and employment through the apprenticeship system, thus according it

its own social status. According to the Report of the FAS delegation which visited Germany, companies which have been approved to train apprentices regard this as a recognition of their competence and efficiency and use it to promote their public image.

### **Alternatives to Apprenticeship - Pre-Apprenticeship Courses:**

In West European countries other than Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the importance of apprenticeship tended to be lessened by the availability of alternative training systems. In France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and in the Nordic countries, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, full-time vocational education is now more important than apprenticeship for the training of skilled workers. In Sweden, traditional apprenticeship had practically disappeared by the mid 1970s. In Denmark, it is being replaced by what is known as Erhvervsfaglige Grunduddannelser, (EFG), or Basic Vocational Training. This involves a full-time first year broadly-based course in a vocational school, in one of seven occupational areas. Included in the course are general and vocational education, coupled with practical training. The school-leaver then takes up employment as a trainee - the term 'apprentice' is not used - with a firm, where training continues and is supplemented by additional vocational education. This system, originally introduced on a 5-year experimental basis in 1972, was legislated for by the Basic Vocational Education Act, 1977. It is now replacing the traditional system operated under a 1956 Apprenticeship Act. An interesting feature of the 1977 Act is that the Minister, on the advice of certain advisory bodies, may prohibit the setting up of apprenticeship agreements under the 1956 Apprenticeship Act, and it is envisaged that, eventually, the only training system in operation will be the EFG.

Similar courses have been developed in France, and also in Switzerland and in Germany, where it is known as the Berufsgrundbildungsjahr, (BGBJ), Basic Vocational Training Year, and covers thirteen occupational areas. In France, such courses provide an alternative route to qualification in a skilled occupation for a minority group of young people who wish to prepare themselves for an apprenticeship, and who are generally the less academically inclined. These may, at the age of fifteen or so, leave the first cycle of secondary education, to undergo a pre-apprenticeship course; this programme forms part of compulsory education which, in France, ends at sixteen years. The courses are of one year's duration and combine in-firm with in-school training.(5) The intention is, however, that participants would qualify for some reduction in the overall apprenticeship period. Employers would also benefit from savings in first year apprentice training costs, though at the expense of increased cost to the State. In a reference to the courses, in Apprenticeship in Foreign Countries, the following comments are made:

The purpose is to widen choice, forestall premature occupational decisions, and broaden the educational experience and maturity. It is one way of raising the school-leaving age from 15 to 16.(6)

These pre-apprenticeship courses should not be confused with first year off-the-job apprentice courses in Ireland, where the course forms part of the apprenticeship period and the apprentice is an employee and not a pupil. However, the concept is being developed in an unstructured way in certain vocational schools here and in some Community Training Centres. It was also proposed as a means of making provision for special groups, such as girls who wished to take up apprenticeships, and also for the handicapped, in the FAS Review of Apprenticeship.



**Parallel Vocational Training in Schools:**

France also has a two-year programme in the second cycle of secondary education in its vocational schools, Lycees d'Enseignement Professionnelle (LEP), which enables pupils to qualify as skilled or white-collar workers within the educational system. This leads to a formal technical qualification, the Certificate d'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP), which is specific to a given occupation. This is an alternative to an apprenticeship, and is preferred by the majority of students seeking skilled status. Traditional apprenticeship, normally following a pre-apprenticeship course and involving parallel training and education in a Centre de Formation d'Apprentice (CFA), (a minimum of 360 hours per year), and in the firm, and leading after two years, to the CAP, does not enjoy high public esteem in France. In spite of efforts by the Government to improve its image, many still perceive apprenticeship as being operated more in the economic interests of employers than in the educational interests of apprentices. This path is followed by only a minority of young persons, the majority preferring to follow the educational route to the CAP. An interesting feature of the French system, (and now adopted by the PESP as part of the FAS Apprenticeship Review proposals), is that an apprenticeship tax on enterprises, initially of 0.5% of payroll, to help finance the initial training system, has been in operation since 1971.

**Eastern Europe: Czech and Slovak Republics:**

In Czechoslovakia, (now the Czech and Slovak Republics), following the dissolution of the Guilds in 1859, a form of 'dual' system of apprenticeship developed. Employers became responsible for the practical training of apprentices and the schools for theory and general education. The development of

the planned economy under the Communist regime, in the late 1940s, and the establishment of large nationalised enterprises and cooperatives led, in the early 1950s, to the setting up, within these organisations, of specialised apprentice centres. These centres, later referred to as Secondary Vocational Schools, although operated and financed by the enterprises, provided the full range of general and theoretical education, as well as practical training, for their own skilled workers. There was, however, a significant measure of control exercised through the Ministry for Education: the skilled occupations for which training and education were deemed essential were specified and the curricula for the various courses were developed and approved by the Ministry. In 1984, these schools or centres, while still operated by the enterprises, were given equal social status, within the secondary education system, with the grammar schools and the specialised intermediate schools, which prepared students for university and technician levels, respectively. The traditional apprenticeship system had, therefore, been replaced by an industry-based secondary school programme of vocational training and education as the method of providing the skilled workforce. As a result of the current change-over from the 'command' to the 'market' economy and the process of privatisation, proceeding from the 'velvet revolution' of 1989, many of the enterprises which had provided this vocational training and education are being dissolved and others are reducing their costs by not providing it. Consequently, the industry-based secondary vocational school system was on the point of collapse and the State, through the Ministry for Education, had no option, if a secondary vocational education system was to continue, but to take full responsibility for its operation and financing. The change-over process is being facilitated by a Strategic Review of Vocational Education and Training as part of the EC funded PHARE Labour Market Restructuring Programme. The Final Report of the Review Group was submitted in March, 1993.(7)

**Traditional versus Institutionalised Approaches:**

In those European countries, where apprenticeship is now considered less important than vocational education as a means of providing for skilled manpower, a number of reasons can be adduced for this development. Apprenticeship had tended to be concentrated in limited fields and rigidities and inflexibility in the system operated to inhibit the rapid response needed to the demands of newly developing technologies. Probably the best examples of this were in the fields of computer and electronics applications, areas involving diagnostic rather than manual skills, where the techniques and the environment of the educational system were more appropriate and more effective than the workplace and traditional on-the-job training methods. In addition, in the context of developing manpower policies, Governments were faced with growing problems of youth unemployment, and, as well, were concerned that economic progress would not be impeded by skill shortages. Apprenticeship was one means of combatting these problems, but Governments were conscious of the shortages of apprentice places in firms and, probably sometimes, of poor standards of training. They set out to rectify these deficiencies by providing alternative training within the educational system, through which they could control quality and numbers and make provision for special groups and new occupations. Apprenticeship was also seen as a general work-readiness scheme, providing a bridge between school and the workplace, which, even if a job was not found in the specific occupation for which training was provided, through its mix of education, practical training and work experience, fitted those trained for many types of jobs. In some countries, as in Denmark, there were deliberate policies to favour school-based training, particularly at technician level which had traditionally been supplied from the apprentice/craftsman stream. The growth and availability of general and academic

education was another factor, and, as has been seen in the case of France, it became the preferred option for young persons and their parents, leading to recognised qualifications, better career opportunities and higher social status. There are some indications that the consequent reduction in the pool of applicants for apprenticeships led to dissatisfaction among employers with the quality of recruits, and they began to look to the educational sector for better qualified entrants to their workforces.

**Certification:**

As apprenticeship tended to become 'educationalised', the question of certification and accreditation arose. Traditionally, apprentices were considered qualified when they had 'served their time', and tests and examinations, other than the production of a 'masterpiece', were not required. As apprenticeship began to be seen as an alternative form of education, often with a direct parallel within the educational sector, the need for formal recognition emerged. The question of comparability with other educational certificates and diplomas arose, and the certification of qualifications based on 'standards achieved' rather than 'time served' became an issue, a topic again being debated in Ireland as a result of the most recent review.

**Comparisons of Skilled Worker Training in Europe:**

Although there are variations, there are, generally, three principal methods by which young people are trained as skilled workers in European countries. These have been identified in the report for the EEC by Hayes and Wheatley in 1979, - Trends in Apprenticeship in the European Community - as follows:

- (a) Apprenticeship - i.e. training under contract with an employer, with complementary vocational education.
- (b) Full-time Vocational or Technical School providing vocational education and practical training in integrated form.
- (c) A Mixed System whereby preparatory vocational education and training at school is completed by employment and training as an apprentice with an employer.(8)

In Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Britain and the Netherlands, apprenticeship is still the principal method of training to skilled status, although, as has been already explained, Denmark and Germany have introduced pre-apprenticeship courses in vocational schools, giving a tendency towards a mixed system. In Belgium, the full time vocational or technical school approach is almost universally used. While apprenticeship is important in France and Italy, full time training to skilled level in vocational schools is more highly regarded. This latter approach, or alternatively, a mixed system, involving a full time pre-apprenticeship course in a vocational school, for which exemptions can be given, appears to be gaining favour in some countries.

It would be fair to say that apprenticeship in Europe is declining and is being substituted for by developments in vocational education systems in recent years. While apprenticeship tended to lead to a cul-de-sac situation, vocational education is now perceived as having far wider horizons and offering enhanced career opportunities to young people. It also encourages greater adaptability and flexibility, aiding a multi-skilling approach and the ability to adjust to new technologies. It is worth noting that the

'Continental' model was much more amenable to change than the 'English' model, particularly in relation to the development of alternative systems within the educational sector and to the expansion, and the discarding where appropriate, of apprenticeable trades to cater for technological developments. The 'English' model, on the other hand, operating mainly in Britain and Ireland in the European context, was strongly influenced by the craft unions and by adversarial industrial relations issues, and was resistant to change. Although those unions always demanded increased educational opportunities for their apprentices, they would see training to skilled worker level within the educational system, or even pre-apprenticeship courses, as a loss of control over the numbers entering the trades. Such an approach to training could also lead to the possible splitting and dilution of some trades and the amalgamation of others, and so introduce multi-skilling, all of which could effect their members' pay rates and job prospects. The British journal, The Economist, in its issue of 24th. May, 1980, giving what could be regarded as the 'establishment' viewpoint, was opposed to any expansion of traditional apprenticeship as operated in the engineering and printing industries in Britain. It stated that these apprenticeships 'are often simply a trade union restrictive practice for reserving jobs for "skilled men" whose skill has been overtaken by technology'.(9)

**Legislation and Administrative Control:**

Practically all European countries have national legislation by which apprenticeship is governed, either under Apprenticeship or Vocational Training Acts. The most notable exception is Britain where, although there are three Acts of Parliament dealing with training, The Industrial Training Act, 1964, and The Employment and Training Acts, 1973 and 1981, there is no legislation dealing specifically with apprenticeship. In the

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Social Policy Series, Studies - Apprenticeships in the United Kingdom - prepared for the Commission of the European Communities, the position there is described as follows:

In the absence of a legislative framework, the initiation and control of apprenticeship schemes has been effected in various ways. For skilled manual workers - the field which includes by far the largest number of apprentices - apprenticeship schemes are normally devised and administered by joint bodies set up by collective agreements between the representative employer associations and trade unions concerned.(10)

To ensure elements of national conformity, these collective agreements are based on recommendations made as far back as 1945, by a Joint Consultative Committee of the British Employers' Confederation and the Trades Union Council. In 1958, a select committee recommended the setting up of a National Apprenticeship Council. However, pressure to keep the training of apprentices within the wider context of vocational training, led to the establishment of a less specialised body, the Industrial Training Council and this was followed by the 1964 Industrial Training Act. This Act which established the Industrial Training Boards (ITBs), the 1973 Employment and Training Act which set up the Manpower Services Commission, and the 1981 Employment and Training Act which rationalised the ITBs, while they have no legislative power in relation to apprenticeship, all had a considerable impact on the effectiveness and quality of apprentice training in Britain. This advance is largely due to the improved apprenticeship programmes and supports initiated by the Industrial Training Boards, established under the 1964 Act, and the professional approach to training which these Acts generated. However, in spite of these developments, the Government White Paper, Training for Jobs, published in 1984, stated that, whereas in

the early 1970s employers had recruited over 100,000 apprentices a year, it was expected that, in spite of special schemes of Government assistance, less than 40,000 would be recruited in 1984 and this number would not be adequate to meet employers' needs for skilled workers.(11)

The legislative provision in Belgium is also at variance with the norm in other European countries. Apprenticeship there is now limited to the basic training of young persons for self-employment in the craft or artisan trades, and in small owner managed industrial and commercial enterprises, and it includes some commercial training. Instead of being controlled by either Education or Vocational Training Departments, apprenticeship is the responsibility of the Department of the Middle Classes, which exercises legislative control as laid down by Royal Decree, (October, 1976), and given executive effect by Ministerial Decrees, (January, 1979). The system is operated through a national coordinating council of employer associations and federations of craft workers. Two Institutes for Lifelong Education, one for Dutch and the other for French speaking areas, assisted by a regional structure, with 'apprenticeship secretariats', supervise operations on the ground. On-the-job training is given by a specialist, often the head of the small enterprise, or by a craftsman. This is supplemented by general education and vocational courses in 'continuing training centres', with additional evening courses which lead to an Employer's Diploma.(12) The main skilled workforce in Belgium is trained through vocational and technical streams in the secondary education system, although draft legislation in 1976, foresaw apprenticeship as being developed generally within the industrial sector in the future.

Responsibility for the administration of apprentice or vocational training legislation varies. As a general rule, where the 'English' model operates, Labour or Employment



ministers are responsible, as in Ireland and in Britain, although this is also the position in Italy. Where the 'Continental' model operates, the Minister for Education is normally in charge. The following table gives an indication of the apprenticeship legislation and where responsibility lies, in some European countries:

Country	Year of Legislation	Minister
Belgium	1959 & 1976	Middle Classes
Denmark	1956 & 1977	Education
Germany	1969 *	Education & Science
France	1971	Inter-ministerial **
Ireland	1967	Labour
Italy	1955	Labour
Netherlands	1966	Education
Britain	None ***	Employment

Source: Trends in Apprenticeship in the European Community.  
Table 6. Control and Administration of Apprenticeship. Page 33.

\* Amended by the Vocational Training Promotion Act, 1981.

\*\* Mainly Ministers for Education and of Labour.

\*\*\* The 1964 Industrial Training Act and the 1973 and 1981 Employment and Training Acts were not specific to apprenticeship.

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Note: Where apprenticeships exist in agricultural occupations, responsibility for them tends to reside with Ministers for Agriculture as is the case with the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme in Ireland.

In Britain and in Ireland, where Employment and Labour Ministers, respectively, are responsible for apprenticeship, local education authorities provide related education. In Ireland, this is specifically provided for in the 1930 Vocational Education Act, while in Britain, under the 1944 Local Education Act, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are required to make provision for adequate facilities for further education, either on a full-time or part-time basis, for persons over compulsory school age. In practice, LEAs will provide part-time vocational classes for apprentices where sufficient demand exists but, unlike Ireland, attendance cannot be legally enforced either on apprentices or on their employers. In Ireland, the Department of Education provides practical and theoretical examinations for apprentices (although non-apprentices can also enter for these) and in Britain, the City and Guilds of London Institute and some regional institutes provide a testing and certification service based on syllabi drawn up in consultation with industry. However, in both countries, these arrangements are voluntary.

In Italy, apprenticeship comes under the legislative control of the Ministry for Labour and is governed by the 1955 Apprenticeship Act. It is one of the three ways by which the skilled worker is trained, the others being vocational qualification courses and the State vocational institutions. According to a Council of Europe Report, Some Significant Experiments in Vocational Training, published in 1977, (13) apprenticeship is becoming progressively less widespread and now accounts for only a part of vocational training for the crafts, 'and is scarcely of any importance in vocational

training in Italy'. Pupils who have completed compulsory schooling, or who have reached the age of 15 years, may enter the workforce directly as apprentices. They receive their technical training in the workplace and may attend vocational training courses at a training centre financed by the public authorities, for 4 hours per week for four or five months, depending on the trade. Here they are given 'a grounding in socio-cultural subjects and instruction in technico-scientific and the graphic arts disciplines'.(14) The duration of apprenticeship varies with the occupation; it may not exceed 5 years, but many are for 2½ to 3 years and some for only 6 to 9 months, the relevant period being determined by collective agreements. The apprenticeship situation there is described in Trends in Apprenticeship in the European Community as follows:

Supervision of the way in which employers implement the minimum legal requirements regarding apprenticeship is, nominally, in the hands of the inspectorate of the Ministry for Labour. There appears to be no effective machinery for the promotion and improvement of apprenticeship or for the continuous association of industry with educational or other bodies for this purpose, except in the context of collective labour agreements.(15)

Another avenue to skilled worker status in Italy is via the State vocational institutions operated by the Ministry for Education. These provide courses of 3 years' duration, post first cycle secondary school, leading to a vocational qualification diploma. This must be recognised by the employer as soon as the holder becomes a worker. The diploma is also a qualification to continue in education for a further two years to obtain a diploma of technical education, which enables the recipient to obtain employment as a 'medium degree technician', or to qualify for entry to university without further

examination. There is a third avenue which is open to early school-leavers who leave without having completed compulsory schooling. These can enter a regional Vocational Training Centre, funded by public authorities, where, after a two to three-year course, which includes about two months of in-firm training, they can enter employment as a trainee skilled worker. These Training Centres are operated by a variety of agencies controlled by various ministries, local authorities, employer bodies, trade unions and, in some cases, religious authorities. Those who follow the apprentice route must pass a final practical and theory test and, when they have completed their training, their names are entered in a register of skilled workers (Qualificati) maintained at the Ministry for Labour. Employers who train apprentices are relieved of the requirement to pay a major portion of the employers' social security contribution. In practice, it appears that very few apprentices receive time off to attend vocational education classes, only a small number of apprenticeships run their full course, and supervision and enforcement of the Apprenticeship Act is ineffective. The following comments, which appear in Trends in Apprenticeship in the European Community, have a familiar ring, they are widely acknowledged as being accurate in Italy and have raised questions whether or not apprenticeship there should be abolished:

Abuses of the law prohibiting repetition work, piecework and overtime are widespread, with the implication that little attention is paid to good training. Instead, apprentices are seen as a form of cheap labour and an opportunity for the employer to benefit from reductions in social security contributions.(16)

**Apprenticeship in Germany: The Dual System:**

In recent years, whenever reviews of existing apprenticeship systems are being undertaken, the German system is highlighted as being the most effective, and it is the model towards which most countries tend to aspire. In Ireland, the FAS Review of Apprenticeship, the Culliton Report, A Time for Change - Industrial Policy for the 1990s, and the 1992 Green Paper, Education for a Changing World, all indicated that apprenticeship here should be modelled on the German Dual system. As well as being the most successful example of the 'Continental' model of apprenticeship, it is also useful as a basis for comparison with its 'English' counterpart and, accordingly, it is intended to examine it in some detail.

The main characteristic of the dual system of apprenticeship in the Federal Republic of Germany is that it combines two 'learning venues': the practical training is provided in-company and vocational schools supply the theoretical instruction. The initial in-company training is regulated by the Federal Government under legislation provided in the 1969 Vocational Training Act, while the school-based vocational instruction is under the control of the Governments of the federal states. These states, the Lander, have sovereign authority under federal law for all educational matters within their jurisdiction. The outstanding feature of apprenticeship in Germany, however, is the commitment to the system of all involved in its operation. The Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), an organisation which was established under the Vocational Training Promotion Act, 1981, and which provides services and advice to the the Federal Government and to all engaged in the practical side of vocational training, expressed the basic concept succinctly, as follows:

Providing vocational training is a public duty. For the dual system to function well and develop satisfactorily it is imperative that all parties involved in both the public and the private sector work together closely, i.e. the companies and their chambers (employers), the trade unions (employees), the Federal Government and the governments of the federal states (or Lander).(17)

The secret of the success of the German system is not the simple fact of its dual character : most modern systems, after all, involve practical training in-company and technical education in vocational schools. It is the judicious integration of this practical training and education in a support system of legislative control and direction by Federal and Lander Governments, the business infrastructure of the Chambers of Commerce, the responsibility accepted by employers for training, and their commitment and involvement in its provision and in the assessment of its quality. The German people believe in their apprenticeship system and are prepared to make it work. It has provided most of them with their work skills and, accordingly, has a high social standing.

**Operational Details:**

In practice, at the end of compulsory full-time schooling, the school-leaver secures an apprenticeship with a firm and is employed under a formal contract, registered with the State. The practical training is undertaken in the firm, or in some cases in inter-firm training centres, and is combined with part-time education in a vocational school. The training to be provided is specified in the apprenticeship contract, along with other requirements, and is regulated, guided and controlled by Federal legislation. The costs of training are mainly borne by the firms themselves, although State subvention

may be available in special cases. School attendance is compulsory for all young persons up to the age of eighteen years, but for those in the 16-18 age range, only part-time attendance is legally required. This is fulfilled in the case of apprentices by attendance at vocational school on one or two days per week for the vocational education and theoretical elements of their apprenticeship. The concept of the pre-apprenticeship course, already referred to, was introduced in Germany in 1969, with the intention that this broad-based initial year would be fully integrated into the apprenticeship system. Although this is the part of the system which has expanded most rapidly, for a number of reasons the arrangement has not worked out. However, for those who have not succeeded in getting an apprenticeship of their choice, this initial year has proved very attractive as a preparation for the world of work. (In Switzerland, where the integration of the pre-apprenticeship type course was more successful, this third dimension has tended to transform the dual system there into a 'triple' system).

#### **Alternatives to the Dual System:**

Although the dual system provides for 66% of all school-leavers who go into apprenticeships, there are a number of other avenues to skilled worker status in Germany. The most important of these are based in the full-time vocational schools of which three categories have been identified in a Report, The European Community and Vocational Training, published in 1981, (18) as follows:

- (a) schools which provide qualifications in occupations not covered by the dual system

- (b) those which provide training for one of the occupations covered by the dual system and where time spent in school counts towards the period of on-the-job training
  
- (c) vocational schools which lead to a complete qualification for one of the occupations included in the dual system.

An interesting feature of the system in Germany is that the standards and the rules of apprenticeship training were, until 1969, those established and enforced, without national legislation, by self-governing economic bodies, mainly the Chambers of Commerce. The Vocational Training Act, passed in 1969, did not alter the apprenticeship system which had been devised and operated by these bodies, but gave the force of law to what, up until then, had been regulated by the statutes of the Chambers. Another interesting feature is that the Vocational Training Act does not apply to vocational training schools, for which the constituent states of the Federal Republic, the Lander, are responsible under education law.

#### **Apprenticeship and the Labour Market:**

As regards the labour market, a free market situation exists, with employers deciding whether or not to take on apprentices and school-leavers deciding for themselves, with assistance and advice from the labour office, whether or not they should seek an apprenticeship and, if so, in what occupation and with which employer. The overall position is outlined as follows:



With this system there is a direct link between training capacity and the demand for skilled labour. There is no call for state planning, nor even for regional or nationwide planning. The decisions taken by individual companies as to their trainee requirements make up both the aggregate demand, and the aggregate supply, of trainee vacancies. Thus the aggravating consequences of misdirected planning are avoided.(19)

This approach to the market situation is seen as having implications for the funding of training, the costs of which are the responsibility of the firms themselves, and it is pointed out that 'expenditure on training is operating expenditure, and is thus reflected in costing'.

#### **Legislative and Administrative Structures:**

In the Federal Republic of Germany, four Federal Laws have the major impact on the regulation of apprenticeship and vocational training. These are:

- (a) The Chambers of Commerce and Industry Act, dated 18th. December, 1956.
- (b) The Vocational Training Act, dated 14th. August, 1969.
- (c) The Vocational Training Promotion Act, dated 23rd. December, 1981.
- (d) The Training Place Promotion Act, 1976.

The Chambers of Commerce and Industry Act provides the legal basis for the existence and operation, of all Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Everyone who conducts a business, with

the exception of craftsmen and traders who are organised within Chambers of Crafts and Trade, must be members of a Chamber. They are self governing bodies with their own source of finance, derived from compulsory contributions from member firms. Under the Act, they are required to fulfil five major functions, one of which is provision and regulation of vocational training, the others include advice and assistance to local authorities on economic, trade promotion, environmental and labour relations issues. Like their forbears, the guilds and 'colleges of commerce' they are very powerful bodies. The present Chambers, however, derive from the French *chambres de commerce*, established in the occupied Rhineland during the Napoleonic era to advise the authorities on the promotion of trades and crafts. Following the recent unification of Germany, there are now 83 Chambers, grouped together under a central body, the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHT). At this level they deal with the Federal Government and international bodies, such as the European Community.(20) They are also organised on a bilateral basis in foreign countries, including Ireland, where there is a German-Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce. At Lander level, through their Vocational Training Committees, they are very influential and have major responsibility for apprenticeship and vocational training.

The Vocational Training Act is a most comprehensive piece of legislation. It provides for the organisation of training, the relationship between apprentice and employer, as well as special provisions for certain occupational groups. Penalties are provided for offences in breach of the Act. Chambers of Commerce and Industry, as competent bodies, may establish Vocational Training Committees with equal representation of employers, trade unions and vocational teachers, the latter having no right to vote. There are separate sections in the Act for each apprenticeable occupation and these specify the

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competent body, technical qualifications for instructors (masters), masters' examinations and the suitability of training premises. The Act, however, does not apply to vocational training provided in vocational schools, this being covered by Lander laws governing educational establishments.

The Vocational Training Promotion Act, provides for the establishment of the Federal Institute of Vocational Training (BIBB). This body deals with the planning of vocational training, research and the collection of statistics, and the submission of an annual Vocational Training Report. Its main tasks include: the drafting of training regulations; the maintenance and publication of the register of recognised training occupations; the assessment of correspondence courses and the establishment of a representative Central Committee to advise the Federal Government on questions of vocational education. This Committee has a permanent subcommittee, known as the Lander Committee, with a representative from each Lander, as well as one from the Federal Government and from employers and employees. It coordinates training regulations and curricula throughout the Lander.

The Training Place Promotion Act made provision for the imposition of a training levy of 0.25% of payrolls, above a certain level, should the supply of training places in firms not be sufficient to meet the demand from school-leavers for apprenticeships. The proceeds of the levy would be used to create additional apprentice training places. This Act followed the findings of a comprehensive study of the costs of apprenticeship, carried out by the Edding Commission. So far employers, who are totally opposed to a levy, have ensured that the supply of places has exceeded the demand for apprenticeships, and the provisions of the Act have not yet been applied.

**Overall Direction:**

The Federal Ministry of Education and Science has overall responsibility for the implementation of the provisions of the Vocational Training Act. (Schools, as already explained, come under the jurisdiction of the Lander, and not the Department of Education and Science). In this task, it is assisted and advised by the Federal Vocational Training Institute, BIBB. This Institute formulates policy, drafts vocational training regulatory instruments such as vocational descriptions and training curricula (a broad outline at Federal level is fleshed more fully in the Lander), draws up examination regulations, sets standards (personal, technical and pedagogical suitability) for instructors and masters, sets criteria for training plants and gives State recognition to the occupations for which vocational training is necessary. The rights and duties of apprentices and of masters and instructors are specified as well as the content of the training contract. The most interesting feature, however, is the amount of the detailed operation and control which is delegated to the respective Chambers of Commerce in each Lander and the willingness with which this work is undertaken with little cost to the State.

**Control:**

To regulate the supervision of vocational training at Federal, State and Chamber levels, representative committees are set up. As well as the Central Committee of the Vocational Training Institute, which has a subcommittee on which each Lander is represented, there are also Vocational Training Committees in each Lander and in each Chamber. In effect, the Department of Education and Science at Federal level decides what is to be

done and this is implemented at Lander level by the Chambers. Each of these, in its own functional area, is responsible for the regulation of training for particular trades, maintaining the register of apprenticeship contracts (in 1989, there were some 783,000 contracts registered), raising the necessary finance and assessing and approving training facilities. All training firms must employ a Master and must be certified as suitable, and registered for training by the Chamber. Other responsibilities of the Chambers include the monitoring of training, the establishment of training centres, the training of instructors and certification of Masters, setting and conducting examinations and tests, including the appointment of examiners, and generally investigating and settling disputes between apprentices and their employers.

**Tests and Examinations:**

Each year, 360,000 final examinations are held involving 20,000 examining bodies, each with equal representation of labour and management plus one teacher. To provide for all this, no fewer than 107,000 experts and specialists from the Chambers give their services on an honorary basis each year, an indication of the commitment to training by employer bodies that could well be emulated elsewhere. To standardise testing and certification,

Central offices work out a uniform set of examination papers and assessment criteria so that a Chamber's skilled worker's or commercial trainee's certificate furnishes documentary proof, valid throughout the Federal Republic, of a successfully completed apprenticeship.(21)

**Training Contracts:**

When the apprentice takes up employment, a training contract, in the prescribed format, is signed with the employer and this will be registered with the appropriate Chamber. The training contract must contain the following elements: occupation; subjects and time schedule; commencement of training; duration; supplementary training measures; training time; probationary period; wages; holidays and termination conditions. In-plant training is carried out in accordance with the Training Regulations which include: the nature of the occupation for which training is being provided; the duration of training, which is at least two years, but normally three years; the skills and knowledge to be imparted in accordance with the description of the occupation and examination requirements. The Federal regulations stipulate that young people under the age of 18 years may only be trained in occupations recognised by the State. The Chambers, with their training advisers, decide on the suitability of training firms and training personnel. Release to vocational schools is on the basis of 1 or 1½ days per week. Approximately 40% of the time in school is spent on general subjects such as mathematics, German and civics and 60% has a technical or theoretical content as laid down in the training regulations. In large plants training takes place in special training workshops which enables techniques and knowledge, not in general use in the main plant, to be taught without interfering with normal production. Training in small or medium sized firms may be supplemented with periods in inter-firm training centres, established and financed by the Chambers, or, sometimes, by extra educational measures.

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**Tests, Examinations and Qualifications:**

Each apprentice must sit an interim examination, during the course of the training to determine the level reached and to assess if remedial action is needed, either on the part of the apprentice or in relation to the Master or instructor. These examinations are conducted by representative boards established by the Chambers. At the end of the period of training the apprentice may take a final examination, again under rules laid down by the Chamber and supervised by a board which it appoints. The skills and knowledge to be examined are specified in the statutory training regulations for the occupation, and may consist of a test of a practical nature and/or theoretical skills. The practical test may call for samples of work done and/or test workpieces. The theoretical test may be oral or written, and increasing use is being made of programmed questions. Having passed the examinations, - the pass rate is in the 80 to 90 per cent range, while the drop-outs account for about 10 per cent of all training contracts, - the apprentice will receive a certificate issued by the responsible Chamber. The Vocational Training Act provides that the final examination may be repeated twice. The certificate is not an authorisation or licence, but its purpose is to indicate that the holder has acquired the qualifications necessary for a specific occupation. Skilled jobs are not reserved either by law or by institutional arrangement for those who possess an apprenticeship certificate and an employer may employ whomever he chooses. The unqualified apprentice may not, however, represent himself as a skilled person. The certificate does form the basis for further advancement and possession of it is one of the conditions for entry to the Master's examination, and for many other further training examinations. Collective agreements are generally negotiated on the basis of recognised qualifications and workers without them may not receive the same conditions of employment as those who are qualified. They

may also have employment difficulties in a tight labour market situation.

**The Master Craftsman - the Meister:**

A firm can only be approved and registered as suitable for the training of apprentices by the Chamber if it has a Master on its staff, and then is subject to certain ratios. The training and qualifications for Masters are provided for in the Vocational Training Act, and to become one it is necessary to have completed a normal apprenticeship, to have qualified in the final examination and have at least three years post-apprenticeship experience. At this stage, an application may be made to the Chamber seeking acceptance for a Master's course. This is organised by the Chamber and may be full-time or part-time and delivered by day or evening classes, in a training centre or in-firm. The candidate generally pays the costs, although some firms may contribute towards these. The subjects covered include business management, labour market and personnel affairs, and the duties and responsibilities of a Master in the instruction and training of apprentices. The course also covers pedagogical matters and instructional techniques. Examinations in the course subjects are set by the Chamber which awards a masters certificate - the Meisterbrief - to successful candidates. The Master, therefore is an experienced craftsman, trained in business matters, a qualified teacher, and a professional trainer who takes great pride in the preparation and the delivery of training to the apprentices for whom he is responsible. Apart from the training of apprentices, a Masters Certificate is also required should a person wish to establish a business.

The German system is essentially the traditional apprenticeship system, developed and controlled by employers through their own



traditional structures, (although with the involvement of the social partners at all levels), to fulfil their need for a skilled workforce. It has been codified and given legislative effect by the State, but 'ownership' rests mainly with employers and, hence, their exceptional level of commitment. It is not centralised, being effectively implemented in the Lander, nor institutionalised, and the costs are borne by employers and have not become socialised as in other countries. The fact that it encompasses so many occupations means that it has a wide social acceptance and does not display the exclusiveness or narrow range of occupations associated with the 'English' model. In fact, while the latter has largely stood still and tended to consolidate its position, the German system has displayed a dynamic which has enabled it to respond quickly and effectively to economic and technological developments. It is a system which is seen to work.

#### **Contrast with Apprenticeship in Ireland:**

By contrast, in Ireland, where the 'English' model has operated, apprenticeship had become part of the adversarial domain of industrial relations. This has involved many unions and employers, with long drawn out discussions and negotiations leading to collective agreements. These need to have the approval of members, and accordingly, the training of apprentices has been linked to issues of workers' pay, intake numbers, ratios, 'who does what', restrictive practices, and other issues which have nothing to do with the effective training of the workforce. The system here has a bad public image, it was seen not to work effectively, giving rise to pressures to develop alternative approaches. FAS, in its Review of Apprenticeship, has carried out a number of studies of the German system. It may be noted that many of the elements of the dual system operate in Ireland, though they are delivered

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through different structures. Some of the faults which the FAS Review identified here do not exist in the German system. There, 'ownership' is largely with the employers, here, it is still perceived as being largely trade union territory, although the PESP agreement may have the effect of transferring it to the State and the social partners. In any case, there is a need for a far greater level of commitment by employers to apprenticeship and to the training of young people generally - because of social as well as economic considerations. The Review found that the State, here, was bearing an undue proportion of the costs of apprentice training, which were becoming increasingly socialised. In Germany, costs are largely the responsibility of employers, and they are regarded as an operating expense; it is estimated that, in Germany, firms spend £10 billion annually on apprentice training and a further £10.4 billion on continuing vocational training. The PESP proposes the introduction of an apprentice tax on certain sectors of industry, in an effort to transfer some of the costs to employers. It should be recalled that, in Germany, the Training Place Promotion Act, 1976, made provision for such a levy if the supply of training places in firms did not meet the demand from school-leavers for apprenticeships. The German employers were totally opposed to a levy, but, because of this Act, have ensured that sufficient training places were available and they bear the costs themselves. The provisions of the Act, therefore, have not had to be applied. The need for a 'standards achieved' system of testing and certification was highlighted by the FAS Review and this operates in Germany, though not with the restriction now proposed here, viz that employers may not employ a person in a skilled job unless certified. The Irish National Craft Certificate, though it is not compulsory, is one based on standards achieved and is similar to that which obtains in Germany. However, the extensive testing of apprentices there is undertaken by the Chambers on a voluntary basis. How the proposed scheme will

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be operated and financed in Ireland has yet to be decided. Provision for the extension of apprenticeship into newer occupations, and the issues of multi-skilling, seem not to be problematic in Germany, where the Federal Institute of Vocational Training (BIBB) makes the decisions. Here, such issues are likely to require long drawn-out negotiations with trade unions, though the establishment of the National Apprentice Committee may help to speed up the process. The solution to this problem in Ireland may be to provide for new trades, particularly in the computer and electronics applications, in Colleges of Technology or in Regional Colleges, possibly through technician courses leading to fully qualified status. In any event, there seems to be a growing trend in that direction. However, while some of the German methods would undoubtedly improve the Irish system, the basic infrastructure of the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry does not exist here and, therefore, some other means of moving apprenticeship away from the 'English' model and towards the 'Continental' model, or some variation of it, will have to be found. The Federal Minister of Education and Science, Jurgen W. Mollemann, writing in 1988, in the foreword to The Dual System of Vocational Education in the Federal Republic - Principles and Experience, puts it this way:

A country's vocational education system is part of its general education system and, to be successful, has to be adapted to the country's economic, social and cultural conditions. That is why vocational education systems cannot necessarily be transferred from one country to another without modifications.(22)

**The Impact of the European Community:**

The European Community (EC), with its precursor the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and its predecessor, the European Economic Community (EEC), which introduced the concept of the Common Market, has had a major influence on vocational training in the Member States since its establishment by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The basic principles which lay behind the Treaty were the free movement within the Community of people, goods and capital.

Vocational training has been defined in European Documentation Series, Periodical 6/1980 as:

actions to prepare people, both young persons and adults for employment as employed or self employed workers. The term embraces both preparation for working life in general, provisions for specific skills and adaptations to changes in the economy and society.(23)

It includes full-time vocational education in second level schools, apprenticeship training, short vocational preparation courses in skill centres or in firms, work experience programmes combined with training, and courses for adults in specific skills.

Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome states that the Community shall:

lay down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy capable of contributing to the harmonious development both of the national economies and of the common market.

Initially, no hard and fast guidelines were laid down, and it was decided that, as experience and knowledge accumulated, the policy would develop over time. In April, 1963, ten general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy were promulgated by a Council Decision. This guaranteed adequate vocational training for all, and the organisation of facilities within the Member States which would achieve this objective by degrees. In the same year, an Advisory Committee on Vocational Training was set up to advise the Commission on matters of vocational training policy. This Committee, which meets twice yearly, is made up of representatives of employers, trade unions and Government representatives from each Member State.

#### **Vocational Training - An EC Policy Instrument:**

Vocational Training became a major policy instrument within the EC and was used for a variety of purposes as the Community developed. For example:

(1) The removal or lowering of tariff barriers between Member States meant that there would be winners and losers and it became Community policy to compensate the losers. One way of doing this was to initiate programmes to retrain people from declining industries for jobs in new and expanding activities and so reduce economic and social problems, due to job losses, in areas where industries would decline. This policy had been developed, initially, for the ECSC

(2) The free movement of workers was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome and it was recognised that this could be hindered by a lack of information on the comparability of skills as between various Member States. Not only was this important from the employers point of view, it was also necessary that workers

should have information and guidance. Harmonisation of qualifications was essential if free movement was to become a reality and 'the transparency of the labour market' was to be improved.

(3) Very often efforts by Governments to provide employment by increasing aggregate demand tended to generate an increase in inflation, due to shortages of skills and pressures on wage levels. Improving the skills of the workforce, through training, was seen as one way of increasing output and productivity in the economy, and consequently the general standard of living, without the threat of inflation.

(4) The link between low standards of education and training and unemployment among young people, especially those in the 14 to 24 age range, had been identified. Training was regarded as one way of improving the employability of this group, and also, suitable training schemes were considered to be an excellent means of introducing school-leavers to the world of work and bridging the gap between school and the workplace. In addition, provision was made for special interest groups such as women and the handicapped.

(5) It was recognised that to fight unemployment, new industries had to be created in areas where employment was declining. A coordinated regional policy for industrial development was needed, which would ensure both the expansion of existing firms and the introduction of new industries. The new skills needed were to be provided through linkages between vocational training and industrial development. Allied to this were the problems created by the expanding information industry, and other technological changes consequent on the changes brought about by the advent of the micro-processor. It was considered that these issues could only be addressed

through a Community policy which included education and vocational training.(24)

(6) In the first ten years of the EEC, and indeed, up to the early 1970s, the labour market situation in all of the Member States was satisfactory. Economic growth was strong and employment, generally, was on the increase. This changed suddenly with the oil crises in the mid 1970s and early 1980s and the decline has continued. All aspects of vocational training, including apprenticeship, work experience courses, community work schemes, subsidised employment for young people and technical education were utilised as instruments of Community policy, in an effort to cope with the problems of youth unemployment. They were seen as stop-gap initiatives which had positive spin-off effects, resulting in a better-educated and skilled workforce being available when the economic situation improved. It was also a means of transferring resources from the more wealthy regions of the Community to the less well off areas. The anticipated economic up-turn is still awaited and the most recent in-firm employment/training subsidy schemes, for which £65m. is being made available to Ireland from EC funds, is being very poorly supported by Irish employers.

**The European Social Fund:**

The main instrument available to the Community to implement its policies on vocational training was the European Social Fund (ESF). This, like the Treaty of Rome, had its origins in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) where it was used 'to finance programmes of job creation and retraining to help workers in the coal and steel industries adapt to new economic circumstances'.(25) One of the principal aims of the Community is to increase the living standards of Europeans and the

European Social Fund (ESF) was an instrument to assist in achieving this. Its original objective was 'to promote the geographical and occupational mobility of workers within the Community, particularly those workers whose jobs were affected by the development of the Common Market'. Initially, the ESF was not very successful but, following a revision in 1972, a new Social Fund was established with much broader objectives. Through this new fund, the Community has now developed a whole series of dynamic policies on employment and, in particular, on vocational training. In fact, with over 80% of it being spent on training for employment, the Fund would be more aptly named the 'European Training Fund'. It is very flexible and can give priority attention to problem areas and categories of workers, in particular young people, most affected by economic, and especially unemployment problems, in the worst affected regions in the Community. The current policy of 'subsidiarity' applies in the operation of the Fund. Financial aid is provided, on the basis of a 50% subsidy, and sometimes up to 65% or, in the case of the recent in-firm training/employment scheme in Ireland, 75%, of the costs of programmes established and managed by Member States. Apprenticeship did not, initially, qualify for ESF subvention as apprentices were considered to be already employees of their firms, and this is still the position. However, in the mid 1970s, when the unemployment situation of young persons became critical, apprentices, recruited by AnCO and given first year off-the-job training in its Training Centres, and in Training Centres of semi-State companies such as the ESB and CIE, qualified for 50% ESF subvention. These AnCO-sponsored apprentices were intended to compensate for possible shortages of skilled workers, due to a fall off in the normal recruitment of apprentices by employers, as a result of the economic recession. In addition, they would provide for the needs of new industries being set up by the IDA, with the assistance of the European Regional Fund. Special apprentice schemes also qualified, as did apprentices who became



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unemployed. Some education pilot programmes aimed at a reform of the vocational education system, such as that based at the Shannon Comprehensive School, also qualified for ESF subvention, as did many of the courses provided by the Regional Technical Colleges. The Young Worker Exchange Programme, initiated in 1964, to comply with Article 50 of the Treaty of Rome, which provided that 'Member States shall, within the framework of a joint programme, encourage the exchange of young workers', is also financed by the ESF.

#### **The Dissemination of Information:**

To implement a Common Vocational Training Policy within the Community it was essential to arrange for the spread of information about the patterns of vocational training and education within the Member States. Prior to the establishment of the EEC, the International Labour Office, located in Geneva, had been the main source of information in this area, in its 118 Member States. In 1966, it published a Monograph, European Apprenticeships, (26) dealing with the training of apprentices in eight countries; Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In the EEC, to disseminate information, exchange visits were arranged between experts and officials from Member States, seminars and courses were held, pilot studies undertaken and information on new developments was circulated through the publication of a monthly Council of Europe Newsletter. In the apprenticeship area, however, by far the most important initiative was taken in 1975, when the Commission decided to assign a team of independent experts to draw up a comparative study of apprenticeship in the Member States. The study was to consist of nine monographs prepared by national experts, and a general report which would be a synthesis of the nine studies. These monographs were published

by the Commission, as part of the Social Policy Series, (No's 27 to 35), in the period 1976 to 1978. The nine Member States, at that time, were Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Italy, Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom. What made the monographs particularly useful was that they were made available in a number of the languages of the Member States and the fact that, in 1979, the excellent synthesis was published.(27) Another useful publication was a set of charts, Patterns of Vocational Training in six E.E.C Countries, prepared and issued by the City and Guilds of London Institute, in 1978. Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg, however, were not included.

#### **The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP):**

A most significant initiative in the development of the Common Vocational Training Policy was the proposal by the Commission, in 1974, to establish a European Centre for Vocational Training. The Centre was set up in 1975 and is located in Berlin. Its management board consists of 30 members, nine each representing the Governments of the Member States and employers' and employees' organisations, and three representing the Commission. The functions of CEDEFOP are:

- to assist the Commission in encouraging at Community level the promotion and development of vocational training and continuing education
- to establish a documentation service with regard to recent developments and research in relevant fields
- to contribute to the development and coordination of research

- to promote exchange of information and experience
- to encourage and support initiatives facilitating concerted action in solving vocational training problems.(28)

The Centre fulfils its role by organising courses and transnational study groups of training specialists in Berlin and in the Member States. It allocates study contracts for research purposes and arranges for the conduct of pilot projects. It also edits and diffuses information through newsheets and periodicals and has excellent library facilities. The Centre, however, is not a policy-making, or even a policy advisory, body. It has made a significant contribution to the spread of information and ideas throughout the Community. The most important contribution in this area was the publication, in the official languages of the European Communities, in 1979/80, and under the general title, Descriptions of the Vocational Training Systems,(29) of a series of nine studies, carried out in each of the Member States, which are currently being up-dated. In relation to the Common Vocational Training Policy, it would appear that the standardisation of educational or vocational training systems is not envisaged, even in the long term, and, while there may be some move towards this, the likelihood is that the policy of 'subsidiarity' will continue. An important local asset for the dissemination of information is the Dublin Office of the Commission of the European Communities which provides a data room service and a reference library which are open to the public.

#### **Influence of EC Vocational Training Policy:**

Though academic education still retains its great prestige, the EC Vocational Training Policy, has ensured that vocational and technical education has been given special attention in the

Member States of the Community and, 'from being the Cinderella of the educational world, vocational education is in some respects now in the forefront'.(30) It has also influenced the debate about the 'raison d'etre' for education and its importance in relation to industrial and economic development. It has promoted a new, and broader concept, that of education for employment as well as for personal development and the pursuit of knowledge. Ireland, in particular, has been a major beneficiary, and most of the recent innovations in apprenticeship, vocational education and technical training have been influenced by EC policies and by the funding provided by the ESF for locally developed programmes to meet Irish needs. It is to be regretted that these advances have not been matched, as yet, with corresponding developments in the economic activity needed to provide the necessary employment opportunities. Recent initiatives by the EC to assist Eastern Block countries such as Poland, Russia, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Romania to cope with the changes from a 'command' economy to a 'market' economy through the development of their vocational education systems represent a new dimension to the influence of the EC Vocational Training Policy.

**Summary of European Trends:**

Generally speaking, the major trends in vocational training and apprenticeship in Europe can be summarised as follows:

- apprenticeship is being increasingly influenced by educational change. The term 'apprenticeship' is being replaced by 'vocational training' and the word 'apprentice' by 'trainee'
  
- young people tend to value vocational education more highly than apprenticeship as a career option, and vocational

education is now the chief competitor of apprenticeship and has made rapid progress in all European States. In some countries, the vocational school system shows a clear gain over apprenticeship. Some courses in the vocational sector lead to full qualification as skilled workers

- the concept of lifelong and continuing education is becoming the norm. There is a convergence between apprenticeship and vocational educational qualifications for entry to advanced levels
  
- apprenticeship is becoming integrated into a total policy for the training of young people for employment, and is being influenced by social legislation and by manpower policies, particularly in relation to youth employment
  
- even in countries where apprenticeship has a high status, its role is declining in commerce and in areas of advanced technology. Parallel systems of apprenticeship and vocational education, both leading to the same qualification, are being developed
  
- pre-apprenticeship courses, or a basic vocational training year within the educational sector, are being developed to delay occupational choice and to provide a broad-based initial training with specialisation in the later years of training
  
- there is a growing professionalism in the delivery of apprenticeship training, with the interests of the apprentice becoming the major factor. The training environment, curricula, testing procedures, training methods and the qualifications of instructors are being improved. Modular training is common, particularly in off-the-job Training Centres

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- there is increasing State involvement both in the control and supervision of apprenticeship and costs are becoming socialised. Member States of the EC, assisted by the ESF, are continuing to put considerable funds into vocational training and education. Levies and special taxes are being used to fund training
  
  - with the exception of Germany, where it is supervised by a Master, training on-the-job still presents problems. In-firm or publicly financed Training Centres are seen as a solution, though a costly one
  
  - apprenticeship periods have stabilised at around 3 to 3½ years and do not appear likely to be reduced further. Testing and certification are the norm with apprenticeship certificates having equivalence with those of the vocational education sector. The cul-de-sac element of apprenticeship is disappearing
  
  - the influence of the EC and the work of bodies such as CEDEFOP have greatly improved the spread of information on training methods and of new developments.

Many of the innovations introduced in Europe have also been adopted in Ireland, and others will form part of the revised apprenticeship system when it is introduced. Our industrial infra-structure inhibits the adoption of the German system but alternatives can be devised, possibly under the umbrella of the PESP. The relationship between education and training needs to be worked out. The fact that vocational education is the responsibility of one Government Department and vocational training that of another requires rationalisation. Although the situation is improving, vocational education is still in the Cinderella category in the sphere of education generally and the commitment to vocational training, which includes

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apprenticeship, is, on the whole, very low. Hayes and Wheatley in their Report, Trends in Apprenticeship in the European Community may have the solution when they state:

An effective and coherent policy for the vocational preparation and employment of young people is an imperative. Vocational training policy has become the concern of society. Within such a policy, apprenticeship can demonstrably play an important and often a major role.(31)

The Government Green Paper, Education for a Changing World has provided the opportunity for a discussion on the development of such a policy.

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## Chapter Sixteen

### FROM PROOF-PIECE TO NATIONAL CRAFT CERTIFICATE

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

##### 1. Introduction

Among the treasures of Irish Art on display in the so-called 'Work of Angels' exhibition of 1989, there was a very modest exhibit. It was a piece of bone of a large animal with various designs scratched or cut into its surface. Dating from the 8th. century, it was found in a crannog - an ancient lake dwelling - in Co. Meath and was an example of the method used to develop the designs of metal workers and to train their apprentices. Bone trial pieces of this kind, sometimes called 'apprentice pieces', must include the earliest extant examples of the work of Irish apprentices. This work must have been the subject of inspection and comment, and no doubt advice, by the master craftsman. It is hardly likely that a written examination was held in the crannog, but one could envisage a form of continuous assessment. One way or another, there is no doubt that the system of producing metal-workers was highly successful; the surrounding display cases exhibited some contemporary examples of the end products of their skills, including the Tara Brooch, also found in Co. Meath, and with patterns described as 'very similar' to those on the bone.

In this chapter the testing and certification of apprentices, as it has evolved and developed over the centuries, will be traced from the expert assessment of the master, through the examination of a 'masterpiece' by external assessors and, eventually, the take-over of the examination and certification

process by professional examining institutes and schools, with the emphasis on skills and knowledge. In recent years, there has been the development by which the modern 'masters' - the employers - are again assuming a prominent role in setting and assessing achievement targets, in co-operation with the educational sector, and with a wider concept of 'competency' as the objective. In tracing this evolution it will be seen that, in a sense, the process has come full circle. The modern approach, in its emphasis, is tending to revert to the earlier tradition in which the craftsman was assessed by his competence to apply his skills in the work situation and his ability to produce goods to quality standards determined by the master.

## **2. Competency in Early Irish Society**

Ireland, in the period from the fifth to the twelfth century, was a land of petty kingdoms or tuatha, said to number at least one hundred and fifty, each consisting of no more than two to three thousand people. To be regarded as a proper tuath, the clan territory had to have a king, a poet, an ecclesiastical scholar and a churchman. Society at the time was tribal, rural, hierarchical and based on the kin or the family. It was graded from the king down through various levels of freemen to the serf and the slave, and consisted of an aristocracy and commoners, each grade having its own status through a complicated system of 'honour-price' calculated in kind. The aristocracy were the warrior class and owned the land which they lent to their commoner clients, in return for services and a rent, also paid in kind. The professional classes, the poets, lawyers, physicians, and the various craftsmen such as the wright, the silversmith, and the blacksmith were known as the 'oes dana', the men of art, and had a special status of their own, somewhere between the commoner and the aristocracy.

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They were regarded as semi-noblemen and had a high honour-price and special privileges, such as the right to travel and work outside the tuath. In each petty kingdom there appears to have been, in respect of each profession or trade in the tuath, an 'ollam cerda', a master craftsman, who acted as an adviser to the king. Manual work was shunned by the aristocracy and in one of the old law-texts, Crith Gablach, in the section dealing with honour-price, one of the 'findings' which reduces that of a king to that of a commoner is:

Finding him at the three handles of a commoner: the handle of a mallet, the handle of an axe, the handle of a spade - for while he is at them he is a commoner.

As in many early societies, skills were hereditary, based on families and passed down from father to son (or to a daughter if there was no son). It was provided in the ancient laws that a son who did not follow the occupation of his father would lose his status as a freeman. Acquisition of the family trade, therefore, consisted of the apprentice or the 'inol' (a commoner with the lowest honour-price of all) learning the skills through working with his father, or through a fosterage arrangement. This learning process probably began at a very early age and lasted until the age of seventeen when a boy became independent of his father. How competency was judged is not clear; perhaps the father made the decision or perhaps it was made by the master craftsman of the tuath and affirmed by the petty king. It is known, however, from references in law-texts still extant, that a number of other old Irish law-texts did exist, which are now lost, relating to the crafts of the coppersmith (Bretha Credine), the blacksmith (Bretha Goibnenn) and the wright (Bretha Luchtaine). These law-texts would have consisted of Brehon Laws, originally in oral form, and written down probably in the 7th. and 8th centuries. Whether they were in the nature of 'training rules' or, as seems more

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likely, lists of the skills and qualities required of these craftsmen is not known. It might be possible, however, to deduce something from Uraicecht na Riar, the old law-text dealing with poets. It specifies seven grades of poet, and names each grade from ollam, the highest grade, to the fochloc which was the lowest. It lists the 'competence' of each grade in respect of the number of compositions required - 350 in the case of an ollam, as well as being knowledgeable in 'all historical science' and 'the jurisprudence of Irish law'. The appropriate grade was conferred on a poet by the ollam and 'the king receives him in his full grade in which the ollam declares him to be'. In addition, the law-text specifies a list of the personal attributes required such as 'his guiltlessness and his purity'.(1)

In addition to the information which can be gleaned from the various law-texts, the ancient Triads of Ireland, which have been defined as 'a triadic arrangement of sayings of Irishmen' (2), provide their own summaries of the attributes of some craftsmen. Some of these triads are thought to have had their origins in the ancient oral Brehon Laws, and could possibly be regarded as a form of layman's guide to the competencies of craftsmen. In the case of the old Irish 'saer' or 'wright' - the craftsman who worked mainly in wood and who combined the skills of carpenter and builder - Triad 118 listed his or her three competencies, (there are references to female wrights), as: 'joining together without warping, agility with the compass, a well measured stroke'. In the case of the harper, Triad 122 gave the three requirements as: 'a tune to make you cry, a tune to make you laugh, a tune to put you to sleep'.

The work of interpreting the Triads is still in progress. In footnote 191, on page 63, of his book, A Guide to Early Irish Law (3), Fergus Kelly, in discussing the distinction between the terms 'cerd' (in its narrow sense, silversmith) and

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'umaige' (coppersmith) gives an insight into the present position:

UB's distinction between *cerd* and *umaige* 'coppersmith' is also found in *Bretha Nemed toisech* (CIH 2219.36-37) where the technical skills of both professions are listed in triad form. Unfortunately, neither triad is readily comprehensible. I hope to discuss possible interpretations in a forthcoming edition of the *Triads of Ireland*.

Notes: UB - Uraicecht Becc, 'small primer', an old law-text.

Bretha Nemed toisech, an old law-text on clerics, poets and other professionals.

From the limited amount of information available at present therefore, it is evident that there did exist in early Ireland some formal arrangements, based on the Brehon Laws, for identifying the skills and competency levels of various trades and also a means by which these were assessed and affirmed. Such competency was recognised by the conferring of status through the honour-price system which made provision, not only for distinctions regarding the relative importance of the craft occupations, but also recognised the multi-skilled craftsman. For example, a wright who was skilled in church building or mill-construction or boatbuilding or manufacturing articles in yew-wood had an honour-price of 7 'sets' (two sets were said to equal an ounce of silver or one milch cow), whereas, if he possessed all these skills, his honour-price was raised to 15 sets. Much lower down the scale, on the other hand, were the comb-maker and leather-worker whose honour-price was only half a 'set', while that of the ollam could be as high as that of the king, forty 'sets', as well as having full nobleman status.

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**3. Competency and the Craft Guilds**

The craft guilds, which were at the height of their power in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and whose main function was the protection of the interests of their members, had strict rules to ensure that their craftsmen were properly trained and that the goods which their customers received were of good quality. Competency and quality control were as important then as they are today. At a time when modern-type examination systems were unknown, the 'training rule' was the apprentice indenture, a legally binding contract, normally for a period of seven years, in which the duties of the master in the training and education process, and those of the apprentice as a learner of the craft, were set out in broad terms. The equivalent of the present day certificate of competency normally consisted of the master's copy of the indenture which was endorsed and given to the apprentice when he had served his time; 'getting his papers' as it was called. Additional status was conferred when the newly-qualified craftsman was admitted to full membership of the guild and had his name entered on the roll of freemen of the municipality, often at a formal ceremony.

The guild, as has been seen, consisted of three well-defined classes: the livery, the freemen and the apprentices. The livery, so called because of their use of distinctive regalia on ceremonial occasions, consisted of master craftsmen of the guild who could set up in business on their own, and it was from these that the officers of the Guild - the Master, the Wardens and the Court of Assistants - were drawn. The Court had special responsibility for the apprentices and would visit them regularly at their work-place to inspect their training and to listen to their complaints. The Wardens, on the other hand, looked after standards and quality matters. They could

seize and destroy goods that were defective or sub-standard and could impose penalties on the offending masters, such as fines or a period in the pillory. It was, therefore, in the master's own personal interest to ensure that his apprentices and craftsmen were well trained and competent and produced goods of high quality. At the end of his training period, and to prove that he had mastered his craft, the apprentice had to submit his 'masterpiece' to the Wardens of the Guild, for examination. This 'proof-piece', as it was sometimes called, normally incorporated all the techniques of the craft and was made entirely on his own by the apprentice. Later, in the eighteenth century, in the case of cabinetmakers' apprentices, the masterpiece often took the form of model furniture, fully ornamented. In some trades, after the demise of the guilds, when the apprentice could complete a section of the work which was considered particularly difficult, he was regarded as having achieved a high degree of skill. For example, in the case of the coopering trade, according to Ned Gavin, one of the last of the country coopers from Ballinagh, Co Cavan, 'When you could compass an oval bottom you were considered to have finished your apprenticeship'. (4)

In St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway, which was established in 1320 A.D., there is a carved column, known as the 'Apprentice's Column', which is different in style from the other five columns along the central aisle. It is said to be an apprentice's masterpiece and one could, perhaps, be forgiven for letting the imagination wander to that day in Galway when the Wardens of the Stonemasons Guild came to examine it. One could visualise the young apprentice in his leather mason's apron with his hammer and chisel, probably white from the 'dust' of his trade, standing beside his master watching in trepidation while the Wardens, in their colourful livery, meticulously examined his column with their squares, compasses and plumb-bobs. He was perhaps thinking of the not too distant



day when - having satisfied the Wardens and completed his apprenticeship - dressed in the 'freedom suit' provided by his master, he would be ceremoniously admitted a full member of the Guild of Stonemasons by the Guild Master and made a freeman of the City of Galway by the Mayor. As a freeman he would also have to accept new responsibilities; he must equip himself with a sword and scabbard, and probably a jake-bow, and be prepared to muster, on the instructions of the Guild Master, to defend the masons' district of the city from attack, possibly by the 'ferocious O'Flaherties'.

The testing and certification system of the medieval guilds at the height of their power consisted, therefore, of observation, supervision, evaluation and correction by the master, over the full period of apprenticeship. Coupled with this was a process of external monitoring by the Court of Assistants and a formal assessment of the masterpiece - a 'product assessment' - by an independent body, the Wardens of the Guild, before the apprentice was rated as competent. However, with the decline of the guilds and the accompanying corruption, this quite effective system broke down. Prior to their dissolution early in the nineteenth century, many of the guild members (and, therefore, freemen with a municipal vote, which was the real reason for their membership), not only had not served an apprenticeship but had become members through 'grace and favour', and often had no knowledge at all of the trade. It was during this period of decline, with the collapse of the guilds, that the purely 'serving time' concept of apprenticeship was allowed to develop, without any of the other supporting checks and balances. Although this has often, and deservedly, come in for adverse criticism, it should be remembered that a successful apprenticeship depended essentially on a good master and a good apprentice and in many cases checks and balances were not needed. This was particularly so in the case of a father and son apprenticeship.

In Germany, where the Chambers of Commerce or of Industry have replaced the guilds, these traditional elements, with the addition of a formal scholastic theory examination, still form the major part of the present system of testing and certification for skilled workers. In the new British NVQ system, too, there seems to be a similiar approach, the guilds and the chambers being substituted for by employer organisations with the involvement, in an advisory capacity, of trade unions and educationalists, and with competency in the workplace being the essential criterion for certification.

The medieval guild system was introduced to Ireland by the Normans, initially with the establishment of a Gild Merchant in Dublin by about the year 1200 A.D., followed later by craft guilds. The guilds were urban based; some thirty-eight cities and towns in Ireland appear to have had Gilds Merchant and many of these included craftsmen among their members. Initially the native Irish were excluded and, after the Reformation, Catholics were not admitted to full membership, although they could eventually become 'quarter brothers'. In the city of Dublin it was an offence for a master to take on a 'papist' apprentice. As outlined in Chapter 3, the guilds were finally abolished in Ireland by an Act of Parliament, in 1846, although the Company of Goldsmiths of Dublin was retained. During the preceding six and a half centuries, the testing and certification of apprentices, in urban areas at any rate, probably followed the pattern of the indenture, the monitoring by the Court of Assistants and the examination of the masterpiece by the Wardens, which had been established by the craft guilds. Where guilds did not exist, common law indentures would have been prepared, with the master being responsible for the competence of his apprentice.

#### 4. Competency after the Decline of the Guilds

The decline of the guild system began about the middle of the 16th. century and the many reasons, both internal and external, for this decline have already been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In 1791, a law of the States General effectively abolished the guilds in the new French Republic. In England, in 1814, the Statute of Artificers, which had been promulgated in 1563, was repealed. In Ireland, in 1846, by an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the power of the guilds was ended, except for Dublin Company of Goldsmiths which was to become the Assay Office. In Czechoslovakia, in 1859, the guilds were also dissolved by legislation. As the centrally controlled nation-states developed, the guilds, a product of the old city-states, had outlived their usefulness.

There was, however, a growing requirement for a skilled workforce and, whilst the guilds themselves may have no longer fulfilled a need, no alternative system for the training, testing and certification of workers had as yet been developed to replace the guild apprenticeship system. Like most other economic activities, it too, had come under the influence of the principle of laissez-faire. There were now no Courts of Assistants to inspect the training of apprentices, no Wardens to examine and certify their masterpieces and no Guild Masters to affirm them as journey-men. At a time when all male householders, with a valuation of ten pounds or more, had the franchise, even becoming a freeman and having a municipal vote, once achieved only by serving an apprenticeship, no longer depended on it. Apprentice contracts under common law continued to be made, young persons continued to serve their time and some, no doubt, continued to complete masterpieces as proof of their competency. A degraded form of apprenticeship developed

to meet the growing needs of the industrial revolution with the advent of the 'factory' and the 'parish' apprentice and the exploitation of children in the workplace. There was no overall control, no supervision and no assessment of standards other than that provided by good masters, father and son apprenticeships and some enlightened factory owners.

When trade unions became legal in the United Kingdom in 1824, the emerging craft unions, with a backward glance at the stability provided by the guilds, attempted to continue some of the old apprentice traditions. They sought to insist on formal indentures, even to the extent of providing their own version whereby the apprentice was 'bound to the trade' rather than to an employer. Entry to apprenticeship was restricted mainly to the sons of existing or deceased members. Standards were 'controlled' mainly by insisting on long apprenticeship periods and restricting the ratio of apprentices to craftsmen, and 'having served his time' became the criterion of competency. In reality, these were methods of guarding against 'flooding the trade', in an effort to protect the interests of union members. In some trades, however, the master and one other craftsman, together decided whether or not the apprentice was competent and, in others, the craft union required a test. In the workplace apprentices and young journey-men had to cope with difficult procedures and crude jokes, and were sometimes 'tested' by qualified craftsmen asking them questions impossible of solution, a practice known in Germany as the 'Hanseln'. At the end of apprenticeship there were also initiation ceremonies at which mysterious formulae had to be recited and certain practices followed. In the case of the coopers, this ceremony was known as a 'comber'. It involved putting the apprentice in the largest barrel available which was pounded by all the other workers in the cooperage and then turned on its side and rolled around the yard. Eventually, the apprentice was taken out and hosed down, after which all

adjourned for drinks - at the apprentice's expense. To be fair, however, it would be impracticable to expect unpaid trade union officials, who had to do their own day's work as well, to replicate the services to apprentices originally provided by the guilds. Well might Mr.T.P.Gill, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, when speaking to the Irish Technical Education Association early in the 1900s, say of apprenticeship and the guilds, 'only a sort of wreckage remains'.

### **5. Education and the Introduction of Tests and Examinations**

Even as the guilds were being abolished, the education system was beginning to be developed and, by the end of the 19th century in Ireland, the structures of primary, secondary, technical and university education as they exist today, were largely in place. In the area of technical education, the Mechanics' Institute movement began in Glasgow, in 1800, when George Birkbeck commenced classes for artisans and workmen to teach them the scientific principles underlying their trades. The movement spread rapidly and, by 1826, there was a Mechanics' Institute in Ennis. By 1850, there were 610 in England and Wales, and research by Kieran P. Byrne, in his study of Mechanics Institutes in Ireland, suggests that they had been established in some twenty-two towns and cities in Ireland by the end of the 19th. century. Some of the Mechanics Institutes in Britain grouped themselves into unions, one such being the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes. This Union is thought to be the oldest examining body in technical education, starting a scheme of examinations, in 1847, in an effort to attract students to the classes of the Mechanics Institutes in its area. In 1855, the Society of Arts, which had been in existence since 1754, started a system of examinations

and, no doubt, students of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, some of whom would have been artisans and apprentices, would have taken those examinations. This School, which had been established by the Dublin Society as far back as 1749, provided classes in drawing, painting and design for manufacturers. A similar school, the Crawford College of Art existed in Cork where, much later, in the early 1930s, the famous stone carver and sculptor, Seamus Murphy, who had attended art classes there as an apprentice, was awarded the Gibson scholarship which enabled him to study sculpture for two years at the Academy Colorosi in Paris. As technical education continued to develop in Britain in the late 1800s, many other independent external examining bodies were established there.(5)

In Ireland the most important of these independent examining bodies from the point of view of apprenticeship and technical education, (at least in its early stages), was the City and Guilds of London Institute. Following an appeal by Prime Minister Gladstone, in 1875, a committee representing sixteen Livery Companies, (remnants of the old guilds), and the Corporation of London was formed to establish an institution for the advancement of technical education in the city. In 1884, the Central Institution was officially opened on a site provided by the Commission of the 1851 Great Exhibition. Even before this, however, by 1880, the Department of Technology of the Institute had taken over responsibility for its technical examinations from the Society of Arts. In 1898, The Massachusetts Board of Education described the Institute as follows:

... the controlling power over technical education in Great Britain. Its position is entirely unofficial but it is tacitly recognised by all the technical institutions of the country as the leading examining body. Its appointment

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of an examiner is accepted by all the institutions, and students from all the schools accept the decision of the Institute in the matter of certificates and diplomas as final and decisive.(6)

Examinations, both practical and written, were conducted on an external basis and were assessed and marked by the Institute. Initially there were three grades, preliminary, ordinary and honours but these were later changed to Grades 1, 11 and Final, and a Full Technological Certificate was awarded to students who were successful in all three grades. In 1911, 23,399 candidates took its examinations in 78 different subjects.(7)

Although Ireland was, at this time, still part of the United Kingdom, it had by 1900, mainly due to the Recess Committee, its own Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.(D.A.T.I.) There was, at this stage, no Ministry for Education in the United Kingdom and educational matters were the responsibility of the Board of Education for England and Wales, which was established in 1899. Because of the 'payment by results' policy, the examinations, initially, were more a means of assessing the pedagogical ability of the teacher than a measure of what the student had learned. The policy of the D.A.T.I., again derived from the findings of the Recess Committee, was that each technical school should be developed to meet the needs of its own locality and to adjust its programmes as these needs changed. A system of State examinations would have inhibited the flexibility of the schools in meeting local requirements and, therefore, the D.A.T.I relied on internal sessional school examinations and the use of inspectors to assess effectiveness. In his Master of Education thesis, The Origins of a System of Vocational Education in Ireland, Paul Dolan outlines the D.A.T.I. position on external examinations as follows:

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Despite the fact that the Department did not organise its own examinations it did co-operate with the Board of Education for England and Wales and the City and Guilds of London Institute in the carrying out of examinations for those pupils who wished to avail of them. (Ninth Annual Report of the D.A.T.I., 1908-09 p.700). However, following changes in their system of examinations by the English Board of Education in 1910, the Department considered that since the programme organised by this was geared to suit local conditions they would no longer be able to avail of the English examinations. (Eleventh Annual Report of the D.A.T.I., 1910-11 p.107). Consequently during the year 1911-12 the Department issued a programme of Technical School Examinations, designed to follow four year courses of instruction in a limited number of specialised areas. The examinations would be optional on both schools and students and certificates would be awarded to successful candidates. (Twelfth Annual Report of the D.A.T.I., 1911-12). (8)

But there could have been other reasons for the decision. At the Sligo Congress of the Irish Technical Instruction Association in 1910, it was proposed that an independent Irish Examining Body be established. In tune with the times, there was more than a hint of nationalism in the course of the discussion, with delegates advocating the breaking of the examination link with Britain and the City and Guilds. Mr. George Fletcher, the Chief Inspector representing the D.A.T.I., and himself an Englishman, opposed the motion on the grounds that the City and Guilds had a very high standing in Ireland and in England and that an Irish body could not compete with it. Nevertheless, in May 1913, the Department introduced its own technological examinations at three levels, elementary, intermediate and advanced at which 2,000 candidates, mainly young people in employment and attending part-time or evening



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classes, presented themselves. However, students continued to take the City and Guilds examinations, mainly because of the much wider range of subjects offered, and schools continued to provide examination facilities.

Although the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations were introduced by the new Department of Education in 1924, the Ingram Commission on Technical Education, which reported in 1927, made no recommendations in relation to examinations in technical schools or for apprentices. It did, however, recommend that all sixth standard pupils in primary schools should undergo an examination prescribed by the Department and, if successful, be awarded a school-leaving certificate. While the 1931 Apprenticeship Act provided that apprentice committees, set up under the Act, could make Rules in relation to educational entry qualifications, there was no provision in the Act for technical examinations during, or at the end of, apprenticeship, nor for any form of final certification.

However, in 1936, the Department of Education reorganised its system of technical examinations, introducing the Junior Trade and Senior Trade Certificates with practical tests as well as written papers. While not designed specifically for them, these examinations were particularly suited to apprentices, covering technical knowledge and occupational competencies in a broad range of industrial and commercial skills. Among the apprentices to take these examinations were the seventy-two recruited by the Irish Sugar Company during the 1934-35 school year. These Junior and Senior Trade Certificate examinations, although they were optional as far as apprentices and the technical schools were concerned, later merged very effectively with the apprentice day and block-release courses and have now become the accepted criteria of competence in the trade area. They suffer from the drawback, however, that both the practical and theory tests are based on examination syllabi

and not generally on the requirements of the workplace and are set and assessed by teachers or Departmental inspectors, with no input by employers. The practical tests are indicators of levels of skill though not necessarily of competency in the workplace, while the Senior Trade theory examination is regarded as more of technician than craft level. When the National Craft Certificate was introduced by AnCO as part of the 1976 New Apprenticeship scheme, possession of some of these trade certificates was specified as essential requirements for its award. In addition to the Junior and Senior Trade, many apprentices also sat for the Department's Technological examinations and for those of the City and Guilds.

At the renamed Irish Technical Education Association Congress in 1942, the need for a national system of examinations for students of vocational schools was discussed. It was argued that pupils of these schools were at a serious disadvantage when seeking employment, even for jobs for which their training had prepared them, in competition with holders of secondary school Intermediate and Leaving Certificates - examinations which were not then available to vocational school students. A sub-committee was set up and reported the following year. Trial examinations were held by the Department in the 1944-45 school year and in June, 1947, the new Group Certificate examinations were held for the first time. Five groups were provided for: Manual Training (Junior Technical Courses); Rural Science; Domestic Science; Commerce (General) and Commerce (Secretarial). The Day Vocational Certificate - the Group Certificate as it was called - secured by full-time day students in vocational schools on completion of the two-year Junior Technical Courses - was considered a suitable pre-apprenticeship course and became the favoured educational qualification for apprenticeships.

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## 6. Certification

The 1959 Apprenticeship Act made provision for examinations and tests for apprentices and for the issuing of certificates. Apprenticeship Committees were required to make arrangements from time to time with the Department of Education for the holding of:

a junior examination for persons who had completed approximately half of their periods of apprenticeship,

and

a senior examination for persons who were nearing the completion of, or had completed, those periods.

These examinations were to include practical tests. The subjects to be examined and the standards to be achieved were to be determined by the Minister for Education, after consultation with the Committee. Provision was made for repeat examinations for those who were not successful. When apprentices had completed their apprenticeships and had passed the senior examination, a certificate to that effect would be issued by An Cheard Chomhairle. In fact, these provisions in the Act were never put into effect, even though the appropriate structure was available in the form of the Junior and Senior Trade Certificates examinations. The reasons were, probably, a fear of high failure rates in the examinations and the effect that this might have on the subsequent careers of apprentices. Also, there could be a loss of control by the craft unions over who should be entitled to be members, and, after all, apprentices were already their members. There was the practical difficulty of dealing with a situation where a young worker's livelihood could be jeopardised by his failure in syllabus

based examinations, set and assessed by the educational sector, while, at the same time, being regarded as fully competent in the workplace by his employer. The distinction between skill and knowledge on the one hand and competency in the workplace on the other, and between certification and a licence to work, presented difficulties. However, the Act also provided that, where An Cheard Chomhairle was satisfied that a person had completed an apprenticeship in a trade designated under the Act, a certificate could be issued. This, in effect, was the practice adopted and the issue of a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship was initiated by An Cheard Chomhairle and was continued by AnCO, and later by FAS.

Unlike the 1959 Apprenticeship Act, Chapter 3 of the 1967 Industrial Training Act, which dealt specifically with apprenticeship, did not provide for the testing of apprentices or for the issuing of certificates to them. However, Section 9 (2) (d) of the Act, dealing with the general functions of the Training Authority, provided that AnCO may:

apply or make arrangements for the application of tests or other methods for ascertaining the attainment by persons employed in an activity of industry or intending to be so employed of any standards recommended by An Chomhairle and award certificates of the attainment of those standards.(9)

It was under the provisions of this section that, in its review of apprenticeship, in 1973, AnCO proposed the award of a Certificate of Competency at the end of apprenticeship. This proposal was to lead, eventually, to the introduction of the National Craft Certificate, in 1986. In the meantime, the Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship introduced earlier by An Cheard Chomhairle, continued to be issued.

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### 7. The National Craft Certificate

In its Discussion Document, Apprenticeship A New Approach, published in 1973, AnCO made a number of proposals in relation to testing and certification. These included a system of phased testing and qualifying tests during the proposed initial off-the-job course and an assessment, at the end of the apprenticeship, of the apprentice's performance over the entire period of training. This assessment was to be carried out by locally convened boards representative of employer, trade union, educational and training interests. Successful apprentices would be awarded a Certificate of Competency by AnCO. In the discussion which followed it emerged that testing and certification was generally acceptable, with all interests anxious to see the details of a fully worked out scheme. In its decision document, The New Apprenticeship, published in 1975, the Council of AnCO decided that, in principle, there should be a system of compulsory testing to national standards, with a National Craft Certificate being awarded jointly by the Department of Education and AnCO. Following detailed consideration by representatives of industry and the trade unions, and by a working party of AnCO, the Department of Education and the Irish Vocational Education Association, a final document, Testing and Certification of Apprentices, was presented to the AnCO Council and the Department of Education. It received final approval in December, 1985, with an implementation date of 1st. September, 1986. A representative steering committee was set up to oversee its introduction and to provide an appeals procedure.

Though compulsory tests formed part of the procedure leading to the award of the National Craft Certificate, the system of certification was a voluntary one and the certificate was not, in any sense, a licence to work at a craft. The requirements

for certification were that an apprentice be registered, have served the full period of apprenticeship, and have passed the Junior Trade (theory and practical) and the Senior Trade (practical) examinations of the Department of Education. (Note. The AnCO practical terminal test at the end of the off-the-job training period was accepted as the equivalent of the Junior Trade Practical examination). These tests were mainly scholastic in character and, while they were excellent indicators of skill and knowledge attainments, they did not assess competency in the workplace. The certification process could have been considerably improved if a formal assessment document from the employer, as in the German system, had also been a requirement. Another anomaly was that the Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship continued to be issued as before. This was accepted on the grounds that apprentices who had served their time were entitled, in fairness, to a recognition of that fact, but it was recommended that the title should be changed to a Statement of Completion. However, a National Craft Certificate had, at last, become a reality, and, though it was not compulsory, the expectation was that the status attached to it and the advantage it could be expected to confer in the competition for jobs, promotion and advancement to higher levels of attainment would be an incentive towards its acquisition.

Questions could be raised on a number of issues related to the testing and certification of apprentices. These include the delay in its introduction, the voluntary nature of the National Craft Certificate which was introduced and the time-span of almost twelve years of discussion before an operational scheme was agreed. One might also question the decision to continue the issuing of the Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship as before, i.e. on the basis of time-serving only.

It should be remembered that the 1927 Commission on Technical Education made no recommendation in relation to the testing and certification of apprentices. Neither was there any provision for this in the 1931 Apprenticeship Act, although there had been a proposal to grant 'certificates of vocational competence' to apprentices in the original draft, (Draft A), of the 1930 Vocational Education Bill, which had proposed to include apprenticeship in the Vocational Education Act. (See Chapter 7). A 'time-served craftsman' was the criterion for competence accepted by both employers and trade unions at this time and there no was public demand for a system of testing and certification of craft skills. For apprentices and craftsmen who wished to acquire formal qualifications and certificates, and for employers who required their craftsmen to be certified, the City and Guilds examinations and those of the Department of Education were available. While employers and trade unions supported them and encouraged their apprentices and craftsmen to take them, and in many cases provided prizes for presentation at award ceremonies, there was no proposal that these examinations should be compulsory. Possession of formal qualifications and certificates was perceived as an indication of an exceptional worker's suitability for advancement and promotion and not of his basic competence.

The question of a test of competency on completion of apprenticeship, as a condition for recognition as a tradesman, became a public issue in the Report of the Commission on Youth Unemployment. This Commission, which was set up in 1943 and reported in 1951, made a number of recommendations in relation to apprenticeship which were later to be included in the 1959 Apprenticeship Act (see Chapter 8). The Act made provision for junior and senior examinations to be taken during apprenticeship, and for the issuing of a certificate by An Cheard Chomhairle to those who had served their time, and who had passed the senior examination. This provision of the Act,

was not implemented, however, and the proposed certificates were never issued. The designated apprenticeship committees were responsible for making the necessary examination arrangements with the Department of Education, but it would appear that the committees' priorities were, in the first instance, to improve attendance at educational release courses and to ensure the completion of the apprentice log-book in accordance with the Training Rules, as a record of practical training on-the-job. It seems that there was no great demand, even at this stage, from employers or trade unions for compulsory testing and certification. The Department of Education, however, provided the Junior and Senior Trade examinations and these were linked to the day and block-release courses but on a voluntary basis only. While they attested to the attainment of set levels of skill and knowledge, they would have been perceived by many as somewhat removed from the competency requirements of the workplace. Also, many apprentices might have had difficulty in passing them. The question of the costs and staffing levels needed to provide an alternative compulsory competency testing and certification service must also have been a consideration with An Cheard Chomhairle. Incidentally, this is a question which has yet to be resolved in the case of the recent review of apprenticeship and its recommendations on certification. An Chomhairle did, however, introduce a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship for all registered apprentices who completed their 'time'. While this could be seen as copperfastening the time-serving concept of apprenticeship, and has been the subject of some criticism, it was important and fair that apprentices should be provided with formal recognition of having served an apprenticeship, as a basis for subsequent employment.



When, in 1973, the AnCO staff Discussion Document proposed a Certificate of Competency for apprentices, the general reaction in the national discussion was positive. The AnCO Council, was somewhat tentative in its decision on Testing and Certification, stating: 'In principle there shall be a system of compulsory testing and certification to national standards for apprentices'. It gave the task of devising such a system to the representative Curriculum Advisory Committee set up in 1976. The initial difficulties with the operation of this Committee have been already been outlined in Chapter 12 and it was November, 1979, before a report on testing and certification was submitted for approval to the Council. As AnCO and the Department of Education were the principals and would be responsible for developing an operational system, the matter was referred to a joint working party of these agencies in April 1981. Its report was submitted to the Council in 1984. Further consultation followed with the Department of Education, the Statutory Training Committees and the Curriculum Advisory Committee, and after final approval by the Council in 1985, an effective implementation date of September, 1986, was finally established. The long delay in reaching a decision can be attributed to a number of factors. In the first place, apprenticeship in Ireland tended to follow the 'English' model, within the industrial relations domain described by Dr. Beatrice Rubens as quoted in Chapter 15. This often involved exhaustive discussions before any degree of consensus was achieved. An added dimension of this was the concern of the AnCO Council that consensus should exist before making decisions likely to be controversial. Another factor had its roots in the way apprenticeship in Ireland had developed since 1930, giving rise to 'dual ownership' of apprenticeship by the educational and the employment sectors. This resulted, almost by default, from the failure of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act and the success of the 1930 Vocational Education Act in making provision for apprentices in the areas of technical education

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and trade examinations. When the question of national certification for apprentices arose, as a result of the AnCO review of apprenticeship, there had to be extensive discussions and agreement on this sensitive matter between the Department, which provided the examinations, and AnCO, which wished to issue the National Craft Certificate. This again took time.

The anomaly of issuing both the National Craft Certificate and a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship was recognised by the joint Education/AnCO Working Party, but their recommendation that a Statement - rather than a Certificate - of Completion should be issued was not implemented. The 'voluntary' as against the 'compulsory' case for the National Craft Certificate was also considered by the Working Party and it was decided to recommend that it should be voluntary, on the grounds that no young person who had served an apprenticeship should be prevented from earning a living as a craftsman because of failure in an examination. The National Craft Certificate was not, therefore, seen as a licence to work at a trade.

### **8. Recent Irish Developments**

In the FAS Discussion Document, published in 1989 and also entitled Apprenticeship - A New Approach, the main issues in relation to testing and certification were identified as:

the need for a system based on standards achieved rather than on time serving

the need for compulsory competency based standards

the need, in the European context and to facilitate labour mobility, for the mutual recognition of qualifications

more 'ownership' by employers.

In-house tests were proposed at the end of each period of off-the-job training, (which would include educational release courses), coupled with a progression of competency tests, leading to the award of the National Craft Certificate. Full craft status, and recognition by both employers and trade unions, were to depend on possession of this Certificate. Assessment of practical skills and related theoretical knowledge were to form the main elements of the testing system. This would be done in industry with the apprentice completing a range of core projects which would be checked by a supervisor, working to standards agreed by employers, trade unions, the Department of Education and FAS.

The National Craft Certificate was to be a compulsory requirement for craft status, but whether it was also to be a licence to work at the craft was not clear. Scholastic type examinations were to be de-emphasised and competence in the workplace, assessed by a work supervisor, was to become the main criterion for certification. These were quite radical proposals in the Irish context but not all of them seem to have been included in the 1991 PESP agreement in its outline of a new apprenticeship system. Specifically included in the agreement were:

The introduction of a new standards based apprenticeship system;

Recognition as a craft worker in future would require possession of the National Craft Certificate as a compulsory qualification.

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The apprenticeship provisions of the 1991 PESP represent broad agreement only between the Government and the Social Partners and a considerable amount of work will be required before the final details of a fully operational system of testing and certification for apprentices are in place. A number of pilot schemes, in the trades of motor mechanic and bricklayer, are currently in progress and these include experimentation with the involvement of employers in competency assessment. However, as will be seen later, the future format is likely to be strongly influenced by some of the proposals in the 1992 Green Paper, Education for a Changing World.

### **9. National and International Competitions**

The International Apprentice Competitions, now known as the International Youth Skill Olympics, had their origin in a National Apprentice Competition held in Spain in 1947. The first international competition took place in Madrid, in 1950, when apprentices from Portugal were invited to compete against Spanish apprentices in twelve trades. Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, France and Morocco joined in 1953. Ireland was the ninth country to become a member when, in 1957, four Irish apprentices competed in Madrid and are credited with introducing the woodworking trades. The Competitions are organised by an International Council with a Secretariat, now based in Zurich, supported by Official and Technical Committees, on all of which the member countries are represented. The principal aims of the Competitions are:

To promote apprentice training;

To promote the exchange of methods and systems of apprentice-training;

To encourage understanding on an international scale among young working people of both sexes; (10)

Since Ireland became a member in 1957, Irish apprentices have competed with distinction in locations as diverse as Korea, Japan, the United States, Australia and in many European countries. The Competitions have been hosted here on two occasions, in the College of Technology, Bolton Street, in 1963, when there were thirteen participating countries and 257 competitors and in the Regional Technical College in Cork, in 1979, when the figures were fifteen and 290 respectively. At the Cork competitions the Irish team won a total of eight medals, while the best away performance was in Birmingham, in 1989, where a gold, four silver and five bronze medals were secured. Apart from the benefits from the apprentices' point of view, many Irish vocational teachers acted as technical experts and assessors at the Competitions and prepared drawings and specifications for use in the tests. Training seminars were also a feature of the programmes. In addition, the two occasions when Ireland hosted the Skill Olympics provided challenges and opportunities for personnel of the Department of Education and the Vocational Education sector to display their excellent organisational and management skills.

The decision to select a team to compete in Madrid in 1957, was preceded by the organisation, on the initiative of the late Michael O'Flanagan, Chief Inspector, Department of Education, of the first National Apprentice Competition here, in 1956. The competition has continued annually since then, both as a vehicle to promote the pursuit of excellence in the craft area and as a means of selecting and preparing competitors for the Skill Olympics. The National Competitions are based, initially,

on the results of the Senior Trade Examinations of the Department or on nominations of exceptional apprentices made by Colleges, teachers, employers, or the training agencies, FAS and CERT. Following further preliminary and final stage examinations, the national winners are selected. From this group, the Irish apprentice team for the International Competitions is selected. As an indicator of quality control, over 7,000 young people have participated in the National Competitions and over 500 have been awarded the Department's Silver Medal. Some indication of the effectiveness of the system in an international context can be got from a study of the results of the Skill Olympics in Sydney, Australia, in 1988. Irish apprentices were in fourth place overall behind Taiwan, Korea and Austria and ahead of countries such as Germany, Japan, Great Britain, Switzerland and the United States.(11)

#### **10. Advantages of a Testing and Certification System**

An effective and formally recognised system of apprenticeship testing and certification has quite a number of advantages. For society in general, it provides a standardised and controlled level of vocational qualifications in the work force, ensuring acceptable standards of competency of certificate holders as well as providing them with confidence and social status; it assists workers when applying for jobs and gives employers information on which to base their recruitment decisions; trade unions use certification as evidence of time spent in learning skills and knowledge and of standards achieved when they negotiate wage rates for their members. The prospect of attaining certified qualifications, leading to enhanced wage rates and social status, is a stimulus for people to commence and to persevere with training, and

often opens avenues to advanced educational, technical and promotional opportunities. Where the testing and certification process takes place as part of formal training and educational courses, it provides a link between the education and training systems, on the one hand, and the work situation on the other, and can benefit both areas. For example, employers, who ultimately are the judges of the competence of those who have come through the vocational educational and training systems, can make their views known as to the levels of competence required and the skills and knowledge needs of the workplace. It could be argued that it is only when the skills and knowledge learned on vocationally oriented courses in the schools and training centres match the requirements of the workplace that quality vocational education and training has taken place.

Generally speaking, therefore, the completion of an apprenticeship is a recognised indicator of the achievement by an individual of a level of skill and knowledge implying competence in a particular trade or occupation. How such achievement is measured varies considerably. In Ireland at present, (although changes are being considered), the requirement under existing rules is to have been a registered apprentice and to have served the statutory period of apprenticeship in a designated trade. A Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship is then issued by the National Training Authority and this provides the necessary recognition of craft status for employers and trade unions. Apprentices, may however, take the Department of Education's Junior and Senior Trade Examinations and qualify for the award of the National Craft Certificate, in addition to the Completion Certificate.

In Germany, on the other hand, Federal law provides for a form of 'certification system', specifying four formal requirements

before skilled status is recognised. These include an 'intermediate examination', which is in effect a progress test during training, and, at the end of the apprenticeship, three certificates which are issued following a written theory examination conducted by the vocational school, a practical test set and assessed by the appropriate Chamber of Commerce and a formal written assessment by the employer. It should be noted, that in neither country, is it a requirement that employers must employ only workers who have been awarded certificates. In effect, these do not constitute licences to work in a particular occupation, rather they determine and enhance employment opportunities. Generally speaking in continental Europe, skilled work is not reserved, either by law or by institutional arrangement, for those who are formally certified as having completed an apprenticeship.

In the United Kingdom, there is no statutory provision for apprenticeship and the training of skilled workers is regulated through agreements between trade union and employer bodies. There is, therefore, no legal system of certification on completion of apprenticeship and a test of practical competence is not a requirement for recognition as a skilled worker. However, most apprentices take examinations, particularly those of the City and Guilds of London Institute, as part of their formal educational courses and many also undergo practical tests on their off-the-job courses.

### **11. The British National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) System**

Major changes are now taking place in relation to the award of vocational qualifications in the UK. In 1986, the Government



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established the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ):

to bring about the reform of vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland through the promotion, development, implementation, monitoring and regulation of a comprehensive framework of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) based upon the standards of competence required in employment. (12)

Note: In the case of Scotland, the Scottish Vocational and Education Council (SCOTVEC) operates a practically identical scheme except that the qualifications are called SVQs instead of NVQs.

The NCVQ, the members of which are appointed by the Secretary for State for Employment in consultation with the Secretaries of State for Education, does not itself award qualifications - it gives a national seal of approval to certificates issued by awarding bodies which it has formally accredited. The philosophy of the approach on which the NVQ system operates has been outlined as follows:

NVQs are based upon the outcomes of learning in the form of national standards of performance, specified entirely independently of any modes of learning. The NVQ model assumes that all forms of learning are most effective and efficient if the outcomes are specified in advance. If what is required for the award of the qualification is absolutely clear, individuals can take responsibility for their own learning, learning targets can be negotiated and individual action plans drawn up. (13)

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The 'learning outcomes' are set out in the form of NVQ Statements of Competence which cover three aspects:

'elements of competence', a statement of what the person should be able to do in the work situation

'performance criteria' against which actual performance in the workplace can be assessed against national standards

and the 'range' of the competence, an indicator of flexibility and adaptability to new technologies, work practices, the ability to respond to change and to transfer the competence to other or new occupations.

By putting the emphasis on learning outcomes rather than on learning inputs, the NVQ approach provides individuals with a wide range of learning experiences, which can be availed of in the formal situation of the school or training centre, or informally at work, or in the home, through private study or distance learning techniques. All of these experiences, as well as skills learned in previous employments, can contribute to the acquisition of a recognised national qualification through the build up, over time, of the appropriate 'credits' in a range of related occupations. By blurring the distinction between formal and informal learning situations, it helps to integrate and align education, training and work experience into a coherent whole. Competency standards for the award of qualifications are set through a national network of groupings, involving employer and employee organisations, which are approved by the Department of Employment and designated by the NCVQ and SCOTVEC as 'lead bodies'.

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Following the publication by the British Government of its White Paper, Access and Opportunity: A Strategy for Education and Training (14), in May 1991, it was decided to extend the concept of the NVQs and the SVQs from the employment situation to young people in full-time further education which would 'develop a broad knowledge base, incorporating general skills where appropriate. They will also promote additional routes to higher education'. These new general qualifications were to be known as GNVQs and GSVQs, respectively, and would be awarded on the basis of programmes undertaken in schools and colleges. Relevant NVQs and GNVQs would be related, so that holders of the latter 'school based' qualification would be encouraged to look to the 'employment based' NVQ to achieve job competency in their selected area when taking up employment.

It was expected that, by the end of 1992, NVQs would be available to 80% of the British workforce and this would include apprentices. By September 1992, over 300 occupational modules had received accreditation in the NVQ Framework in eleven industrial and service industry competency areas, and 70 awarding bodies had been approved. In the case of the GNVQs, programmes had already started in over 90 schools and colleges.(15)

The overall objectives of the National Vocational Qualifications initiative in the UK are, firstly, to raise the levels of skill within the workforce, with particular emphasis on adaptability and flexibility in order to cope with changing technology and work practices, and secondly, to develop a framework which will encourage higher levels of participation and provide for a much wider access to qualifications for all. It is too early yet to assess its effectiveness but, if it succeeds, it may also help to provide a solution to the education versus training debate, with both being regarded as different aspects of the same process; it will identify

competence, i.e. the ability to perform effectively in the workplace, as the essential component for the award of an employment qualification; and it will also place the responsibility for determining and assessing the competency levels of the workforce where it should rest, with employers on whom, in the final analysis, the quality of the work and of the product depends.

### **12. The National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA)**

There was a somewhat parallel development in Ireland with the establishment by the Minister for Education in October, 1991, on an ad-hoc basis, of the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA). Its terms of reference included:

to structure courses in vocational/technical education and training, as provided by the education system, on a modular basis

to develop an appropriate framework of levels of qualification for these courses

to develop modular content for the core modules of such courses to be applied at a national level

to review and approve regional specific modules as proposed by Regional Co-ordinating Groups

to establish guidelines, criteria and standards for the assessment of participants' performance by individual course providers

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to monitor compliance with criteria and standards ....

to certify participants' performance based on the outcome of assessment by course providers .....

to act as a National Agency for the recognition of relevant vocational qualifications obtained in other member states of the European Community and as an Information Centre for authorities in other member states in relation to NCVA qualifications.(16)

The scope of the NCVA was, however, much more limited than that of the British NCVQ. Its main function was to offer students on Vocational Training Programmes at pre- and post-Leaving Certificate level, and those on Adult Education Programmes, standardised national and internationally recognised certification. It was intended that it should include Youthreach programmes, Travellers Workshops and some courses conducted by organisations such as Coillte and Teagasc, most of which would qualify for support from the European Social Fund. It was education orientated and did not have the broad employment base and involvement of the workplace as in Britain, nor would it have responsibility for apprentice certification. National accreditation was to operate on the basis that courses would consist of a number of modules, or self-contained areas of vocational training, study or work experience. When each module was completed it would be assessed separately and a credit awarded. When the required number of credits had been obtained, a national certificate, at a particular level, would be awarded and this certificate would also command international recognition.

The Council has published its first report, Preparing for the New Europe in which it gave details of its terms of reference and of the courses coming within its remit. Some Boards of

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studies were set up by the NCVA and it was intended to invite course providers to submit their courses, or individual modules, for validation. The terms of reference of Regional Co-ordinating Groups had been drafted but further developments appear to have been postponed by the publication of the Green Paper, Education for a Changing World, in June, 1992.

### **13. Proposed Council for Educational and Vocational Awards**

#### **(CEVA)**

In the Education Green Paper, under the heading, Certification, it was proposed to constitute a new Council, on a statutory basis, which would include the functions of the National Council for Vocational Awards and those of the National Council for Educational Awards. This new body, to be known as the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA);

would bring together all concerned education, training and business interests, including the social partners. The CEVA would have a wide remit covering all aspects of vocational training provided by both the education and training agencies, including apprenticeship training, as well as taking over the role of the NCEA in relation to third level courses outside the university sector.(17)

The intention is to develop a common and comprehensive certification system providing national and international recognition for all forms and levels of vocational training. Courses would be structured on a modular basis allowing school-leavers and mature students to qualify for certificates on the basis of accumulated credits. Such certification would enable

them to enter employment immediately or transfer to more advanced education or training programmes. There is one significant difference, however, between the proposed Irish CEVA and the British NCVQ systems. In Ireland, it would appear that the proposed new Council (CEVA) will be the responsibility of the Minister for Education, while in Britain, the NCVQ, which now includes vocational qualifications for use in full-time education within its framework, is controlled by the Secretary of State for Employment. It will be important that the proposed CEVA should reflect adequately the essential role of employers and employment in the learning process for workers and should not be dominated by educational interests. In any national system for the award of vocational qualifications, based on the accumulation of credits, it is essential that appropriate weightings should be given to experience and learning gained in the workplace and that examination results should not be overweighted. In the case of the ad-hoc National Council for Vocational Awards, excluding the Chairperson, there were only two employer representatives in a Council consisting of fifteen members. It is to be hoped that this imbalance will be redressed in the composition of the new Council. As far as apprenticeship is concerned, linking it into a national vocational qualification system, with provision for transfer to higher levels, will improve its image and status.

#### **14. Conclusion**

The concept of 'competence', the ability to perform effectively in the work situation, is now becoming the accepted criterion for assessment and certification of workers. Under the German dual system, at the end of apprenticeship, three certificates

are issued each of which might be regarded as a different indicator of occupational competency. These are:

(1) A standardised Final Certificate issued by a Chamber of Commerce or of Industry on the basis of a practical terminal examination in the work-place, either through a 'product' or 'process' assessment approach, aimed at establishing competency levels in relation to specified nationally approved criteria.

(2) A Vocational School Certificate, issued following an examination conducted by the vocational school in theoretical subjects.

(3) An Employer Training Report, which is based on long-term observation and supervision during the apprenticeship period and which covers some of the core skills e.g. teamwork and adaptability, so important in the work place.

In effect, in Germany, it is the Final Certificate, which is the most important in relation to subsequent employment, with the Training Report more or less fulfilling the function of an employer's reference. The Vocational School Certificate, although it may be useful for educational advancement, has very little impact in the work situation. The German system of testing and certification evolved over time and would be regarded as a traditional approach, having some elements with origins in the old medieval guilds.

On the other hand, the new British NVQ approach, introduced in 1991, could be said to have been purpose built to meet modern requirements. It developed from detailed consideration over the five year period following the establishment, by the British Government in 1986, of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), with the objective of reforming the vocational qualifications system. As in Germany,



competence is given a high priority as a requirement for certification and employers have a major role in establishing and assessing levels of competency. In Germany, employers were involved through the Chambers of Commerce or of Industry, while in Britain, responsibility was given to various Federations, Associations, Councils, Institutes, and bodies such as the City and Guilds of London, Training Boards and similiar professional organisations in the various employment sectors. The key element in the NVQ approach was the Statement of Competence and it was specified that:

All NVQs must consist of an agreed statement of competence, which should be determined or endorsed by a 'lead body' with responsibility for defining, maintaining and improving national standards of performance in the sectors of employment where the competence is practised.

Responsibility for defininmg statements of competence rests with the recognised 'lead body', which should be led by employers, working with employees (including Trade Unions) and their education and training advisers. (18)

Note: 'Lead bodies' are part of a national network of organisations designated by the Department of Employment and recognised by the NCVQ.

Areas of difference between the two systems are: in Britain, there is more flexibility and self-learning in the methods of achieving competence, with the emphasis on learning outcomes rather than on formal teaching inputs. This is facilitated by a modular approach and the use of a credits system for the award of qualifications; Germany, on the other hand, relies more on traditional structured comprehensive programmes and courses with once-off type examinations and assessments. The British system would, therefore, appear to be more suited to the

present day requirements for a more adaptable workforce capable of adjusting quickly to changes in work practices and methods. The entrants to this workforce are also likely to have higher educational levels than heretofore, and will, consequently, be more achievement conscious, with a positive attitude to self-learning techniques. It may, however, prove a difficult system to manage effectively.

With the setting up, even on the ad-hoc basis and with a restricted brief, of the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) here in 1991, the need for a national certification system in the area of vocational education and training was acknowledged. The fact that it was to provide also for international recognition was, for a country which has such high levels of emigration of young people, a very positive step. The proposed new Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA), when it comes to make decisions on the format of a revised testing and certification system for apprentices, will have the opportunity to assess the respective merits of the traditional well tried German apprenticeship approach or the British NVQ system which, although 'state of the art' in conception, is as yet unproven.

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## Chapter Seventeen

### THE FUTURE

#### Overview:

Apprenticeship as an economic and social institution is known to have existed before 3000 B.C. in Mesopotamia, the 'land between the rivers' - Tigris and Euphrates - in the ancient Sumerian city states. This region, now in Iraq, has long been regarded as the cradle of the world's first civilisation. Apprenticeship was well established at the time of the Pharaohs and in the old Greek and Roman civilisations, and probably reached the high point of its development in the craft guilds of the city states of medieval Europe. It formed part of the guild system which previously existed in Japan, though now largely superseded by corporate in-plant training following a sound basic education. It was imported into the North American continent and into Australia from Europe and today, in Brazil, in the South American continent, it forms an integral part of a highly regarded industrial training system, which also provides an academic education, and is operated by SENAI (Servico Nacional do Aprendizagem Industrial - The National Industrial Apprenticeship Training Service), established under the Confederation of Brazilian Industries. Incidentally, this is one of the few national training boards which has only employer representation. SENAI has also provided a focus for a recent feasibility study for the transfer of its system of apprenticeship training from Brazil to other Latin American countries.(1)

**Survival and Development:**

Apprenticeship has survived the collapse of the earlier civilisations and, even though it was an essential component of the medieval guilds, it continued to exist in spite of the legislation in many European countries providing for their dissolution during the 18th. and 19th. centuries. When, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the status of the craftsman changed from that of independent designer, producer and seller of his product or service to that of a 'hired hand', selling his skills and knowledge to an employer for a wage, apprenticeship continued as a means of providing for skilled workers, in the absence of a suitable alternative. With increasing technological developments, the advent of technical education, in the late 19th. and early 20th. centuries, would appear to have provided an alternative system. It was soon recognised, however, that it did not provide the complete answer and, as the International Labour Office (ILO), put it:

Technical development would seem essentially to require not less but more of that judicious blend of pedagogically well designed basic training at school or in a training workshop, carefully planned related instruction and systematic and controlled work experience which only a well-balanced apprenticeship programme can provide.(2)

On the other hand, and particularly during the 'training revolution' in the mid 1900s, apprenticeship had an adverse public image. This was due to its being perceived as a system in which apprentices were employed as cheap labour, often acting as tea-boys, and involving learning methods which were out of date, and incompatible with modern requirements. It conjured up images of young people taking years to learn basic skills which, by using up-to-date teaching techniques, could be learned in weeks. It was caricatured as the 'sitting by

Nellie' approach, without regard to the fact that demonstration and imitation are essential training techniques and that 'Nellie', operating in the real work environment, could be an extremely competent worker and an excellent trainer. The idea of 'life-long' education and training was also emerging and there was growing opposition to the concept that all the skills of working life had to be learned between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one years, with the result that adults could be excluded from employment for which they had the skills and aptitudes, simply because they did not serve apprenticeships when they were young. This led to an attack on the whole concept and to suggestions that the system should be abolished. In fact, following the 1964 Industrial Training Act in the United Kingdom, the Engineering Training Board, in a document setting out its recommendations for the training of engineering craftsmen, studiously avoided using the term 'apprentice', substituting 'trainee' instead. There was a somewhat similiar attitude in certain quarters in Ireland coupled with a tendency to equate industrial training with apprenticeship and to ignore the broader dimensions of the latter.

**Integration with Technical Education:**

The apprenticeship system coped successfully with newly developing trades in the areas of telecommunications, electricity, motor and aircraft maintenance. The advent of these new technologies coincided, to a large extent, with the introduction of technical education and the integration of the new trades into the apprenticeship system was largely due to the link which developed between technical education and the apprenticeship system, a partnership which marked a new phase in the development of the latter. In these trades, diagnostic skills, based on theoretical knowledge, tended to become more important than manual skills and, therefore, the

classroom or the teaching laboratory, with its formal teaching approach, provided a more effective learning environment.

Apprenticeship was not solely confined to 'blue collar' occupations; a number of 'white collar' professions such as those of solicitor, accountant and architect also adopted it, and, coupled with specialised education programmes, it is the means by which some of their entrants are trained. In the case of the legal profession, the training of lawyers is said to date from 1292. In England, Statute 4 of Henry IV (1399-1413) provided that 'all attornies shall be examined by the justices and by their discretion put into the roll', whereas Statute 7 of George II (1727-1760), which applied to Ireland, required solicitors' apprentices to be registered and it also decreed:

No person shall be admitted an attorney, or licensed to be a solicitor, in any of the four courts, (in Dublin) who hath not been a protestant from his age of fourteen years, or for two years before his being admitted an apprentice, and who shall not have served an apprenticeship for the space of five years at least ... (3)

The 1851 Solicitors Act dealt with articulated apprentices in the legal profession and this and a number of other laws relating to such apprentices were amended and consolidated, in 1898, in a Statute entitled the Solicitors (Ireland) Act. This dealt with solicitors and the service of indentured apprentices. The current provisions dealing with solicitors' apprentices in Ireland is covered in the Solicitors Act, 1954.

#### **Areas of Decline and Evolution:**

In Ireland, some trades have effectively disappeared, some have amalgamated while others have divided to cater for new occupations. The introduction of new materials and machinery



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which led to the manufacture of the aluminium cask and, later, the plastic barrel, heralded the end of the cooper's trade. The carriage-builder and wheelwright were ousted by the more advanced technology of the motor-car. In an early attempt at multi-skilling, probably because of decreasing volumes of work in each separate trade, painters, decorators, sign-writers and glaziers amalgamated to form one trade, that of painter-decorator. The opposite tendency is illustrated by the Guild of St. Luke whose charter was granted on St. Luke's Day in October, 1446; it incorporated the trades of barber, peruke-maker (wig-maker) and 'chirurgeons' or surgeons. The break-up began as far back as 1780, when the latter dissociated themselves from the Guild to form the Dublin Society of Surgeons. Other crafts underwent an evolution: the stone-layer became the modern bricklayer, using, also, some of the skills of the stone-cutter, while the stone-carver became the present-day sculptor or sculptress learning the necessary skills in a school of art, and working, not in a stone-yard, but in a studio. Some former apprenticeship trades are no longer so: mercer apprentices, who might once have aspired to becoming shop-owning merchants, have been succeeded by the shop or sales assistants, selling a wide variety of goods or services or, perhaps, using a price-scanner at the check-out in a modern supermarket.

There were also attitudinal changes. In his book, Stone Mad, Seamus Murphy described how, often, when working on a piece in the stone-yard as an apprentice stone-carver, he would become aware of being observed from behind. It was usually one of the stone-carvers looking at his work and he would stand to one side to await the verdict. There would normally be encouraging comments on his general progress, perhaps a hint or two on how to grip or use the tools more effectively, an assessment of the quality of the work and, finally, a practical demonstration of how the work-piece might be improved. Under no threat from

any parallel system for the acquisition of their skills, the craftsmen considered that they were involved, not only in handing on their skills to the apprentice, but also 'offering him something of themselves as well - an atmosphere in which he would be able to measure himself against others and take pride in his work'. Murphy describes one such episode as follows:

I remember being invited, as a great treat, to go with two of the carvers to Cobh Regatta. I was thrilled. It was my first visit to Cobh. But I saw no regatta. Instead we spent our time examining the carving inside and outside the cathedral. Afterwards we descended to the town and they bought me lemonade and biscuits, my mind full of strange words: crockets, diapers, bosses, annulets, cornices, pendants, finials, cluster-columns - it seemed to me like a new language and I wondered would I know as much as these men when my seven years were up.(4)

Perhaps, in the early years of this century, the present-day Japanese concept of the firm as a 'learning organisation' and with learning having the status of a 'corporate objective' unknowingly formed part of the unwritten philosophy of the traditional apprenticeship system. The craftsman of today in Ireland is probably too concerned with meeting production targets and deadlines or with the security of his employment to have much time to devote to the instruction of his apprentice. He probably does not see it as part of his job and, in any case, the technical school or training centre provides a parallel system, - 'the learning organisation' has been transferred elsewhere. He may feel somewhat intimidated by the higher standard of formal education of his apprentice and see him as a threat to his own future employment prospects rather than a vehicle for handing on or improving his trade.

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The apprentice, too, has changed. In his poem, Christmas in a Village, John Clare, (1793-1846), describes the scene as follows:

And oft for pence and spicy ale  
With winter nosegays pinned before,  
The wassail singer tells her tale  
And draws her Christmas carols o'er,  
While prentice boy with ruddy face  
And rime-bepowdered dancing locks  
From door to door with happy pace  
Runs round to claim his Christmas box.

Whatever about the dancing locks, the present-day apprentice differs from his predecessor in that he is more mature, more independent, better educated and, while at school, has developed a wide range of modern learning techniques. Apprenticeship as a career option today, would be seen to have a number of negative aspects. For example, having to spend a number of years working at reduced pay levels and subject to the disciplines and conditions of the workplace, acquiring skills which could be learned much more quickly using up-to-date instructional methods. An added disincentive could be that the learning period in the work environment is not accorded the same status or recognition for the award of formal qualifications as the same period spent in the more relaxed educational environment. The 'ascendancy of academic education' still prevails over the practical education of the workplace. This latter factor has been recognised in the Green Paper, Education for a Changing World, and may be redressed by the proposals to vocationalise education.

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**Alternatives - Institutionalised Models:**

There are, of course, other methods of training young people for skilled occupations. Japan has never established a national training infrastructure because practically all vocational and industrial training takes place on-the-job. Japanese firms have little interest in vocational courses, preferring to recruit young persons with a good general education into the organisation, rather than into specific occupations, in order to avoid too-early specialisation. This approach could be regarded as an apprenticeship to the firm, rather than to a trade, and would tend to inhibit the transferability of skills, a factor which would not be of importance in Japan, however, as employees tend to spend their working lives with the same firm. Training is regarded as a corporate objective and the business or enterprise is structured accordingly. Full-time training specialists rarely exist but highly skilled workers, who, like the German 'Meister', have been trained (though not formally certified) to teach, are rotated into training functions as part of a normal in-firm job-rotation pattern. The result is that every worker is expected to be a trainer and a learning culture exists within the firm. Costs are borne by the corporate budget, training becomes synonymous with job performance and, consequently, 'state of the art' in the context of the firm. Curriculum guidelines are established at national level by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture while in-firm vocational training, skill testing and certification are the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour. Retraining, referred to as 'capacity redevelopment training' is undertaken in national, provincial or local vocational training institutes to provide the necessary skills for re-entry to the labour force. While the more traditional apprenticeship still exists in Japan, it is in decline and less than 9% of school-leavers are trained in this way.(5)

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According to Professor David Wilson in his article, National Reform Efforts in Technical-Vocational Education - A Comparative Analysis, published in 1992, (6) there have been four reforms of the technical, vocational education and training systems in Sweden in the past fifty years. Apprenticeship has practically disappeared and exists only in very few trades such as that of cobbler, and as the final, or 'finishing', work placement year of secondary vocational education courses in hairdressing or in building and construction. The vast bulk of initial vocational education and training is now undertaken at secondary school level, where over 80% of the courses are 'vocational' in their orientation. Some 30 curriculum streams, (soon to be reduced to 14), are provided for and include technical subjects, science, industry and craftsmanship, economics, commercial and office studies, nursing, social service and consumer studies. Over 90% of the relevant age cohort now enrolls in one or other of these vocational streams and they have become the first choice of the majority of students at the end of compulsory education. The old apprenticeship system has, in effect, been absorbed into this system of vocational education. On completion of their upper secondary schooling, students seek employment in the areas of their vocational orientation with businesses or enterprises where training continues under the control of the National Employment Training Board, which has responsibility for labour market policy and in-firm training. Swedish employers pay two payroll levies, one in support of continuing education and the second to support the National Employment Training Board. In addition, there is a novel compulsory profit levy on all companies which provides a Renewal Fund to finance training, normally for those with low levels of educational attainment, as well as research and development. The issues of examinations and certification have been subject to considerable debate in Sweden. Testing and certification is undertaken by the institutions where the education and training

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is delivered including the secondary schools, the Training Board, Employer Confederations and individual employers. The system is, however, currently being reformed in anticipation of Sweden's entry to the EC.(7)

Institutionalised vocational training, as in the Swedish model, is normally introduced where a Government is seeking, in the context of developing a labour market policy, to redress some of the deficiencies of an apprenticeship system operated by employers, and over which the State has little control. In particular, there are fears that skilled manpower shortages might inhibit future economic growth at a time when there is also high youth unemployment. There are also issues of gender equality and of social concern for special interest groups. These lead to a search for training strategies which will give the State control over the numbers to be trained and the skills in which training is to be given as well as the training of women for traditionally male occupations, and of groups such as the handicapped and the socially deprived. It is considered, too, that the quality of training could be improved and more effectively monitored and controlled if delivered in an institution staffed by professionals rather than in the production orientated environment of the workplace. There is merit in some of these arguments and, no doubt, better manpower planning, more equitable selection and high levels of skill and knowledge can be achieved in such an institutional setting. Indeed, this approach may be preferable for some of the newer occupations in electronics and computer applications and for keyboard and secretarial skills where adequate work experience can often be arranged within the institution. Both Germany and Switzerland are tending to use this method as a parallel system to apprenticeship for some of these occupations. Such arrangements, however, may lose one of the key positive elements of apprenticeship; the experience in the workplace and the reinforcement of skills and knowledge which results

from the repetition, supervision and correction inherent in well managed time-serving arrangements. Work placements may, of course, compensate in a limited way but these are generally of short duration and are unlikely to provide sufficient time to inculcate some of the core skills of the work environment. Another aspect of the institutionalisation of training which could be seen as a negative factor is that the modern well-equipped and well-managed workplace, competing with others for market share in terms of technological development, quality and price of its products, is, as has been observed in relation to the Japanese approach to training, more likely to be at 'the cutting edge' in terms of technology, technical equipment and know-how than a vocational training institution.

**A General Assessment:**

Apprenticeship is one of a number of ways by which modern society trains its young people for working life. It satisfies both economic and social needs; the modern economy needs skilled workers to produce goods and services and young people need preparation and training to enable them to secure well-paid, and rewarding employment and to enjoy the security they need to bring up their families and to make their own contribution to society. Effectively implemented, apprenticeship provides the essential ingredients for the development of a young worker; knowledge, skill and real work experience. It is, by far, the oldest of the training systems, existing long before technical education and industrial development.

The survival of apprenticeship is due to the fact that it was part of civilisation itself and consequently developed with it, continuously fulfilling economic and social needs, from pre-historic stone dwellings to modern computers. In early times,

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before the advent of schools, it was in the natural order of things for a father to impart what knowledge and skills he had to his sons and for a mother to do likewise for her daughters. As society developed and established itself in towns for mutual protection and into organisations to safeguard its economic and social interests, the acquisition of skills and knowledge, too, became more organised. With the advent of the guild system, apprenticeship became formalised and continued for centuries as a 'stand alone' training system, covering practically all economic occupations, until the abolition of the guilds in the early 19th. century. In fact, it contributed to economic development itself, (and to an enterprise culture), for, at the time of the guilds, it was the aim of every apprentice to become a master and establish his own business. The social concerns resulting from exploitation of child labour during the industrial revolution and the advent of technical education in the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in a revival of apprenticeship and led to the introduction of legislation in many countries to promote it.

The interest in industrial training in the middle of the present century had a mixed effect on apprenticeship. Some countries, such as Ireland, Germany and Switzerland, introduced legislation and adopted training policies aimed at reinforcing and improving it; some sought to replace it with alternative systems, either totally within secondary vocational education as in Sweden, or partly in education (on a release basis) and partly in industry, as in Great Britain; other countries retained it for some occupations and developed parallel systems within their education sectors to cater for newer occupations, while still others, as in Denmark, moved the first year into vocational education, providing broadly based programmes in a limited number of occupational clusters, postponing career choice, but retaining the work experience element in the employment situation. It is now losing its 'stand alone' status



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with the training contract replacing the apprenticeship indenture. Today, the general trend is to integrate apprenticeship with vocational education and non-apprenticeship training systems, to rationalise the number of occupations and to broaden the training base to provide for multi-skilling. The objective now is to develop a more flexible and adaptable worker, with the mental attitude which does not see change as a threat but adjusts readily to it, who is prepared to master new skills to cater for new technologies and is committed to an on-going learning process. The concept of apprenticeship as the once-off training of a young person for a specific occupation is an anachronism in today's world, and the skills range will need a foundation of enhanced educational levels and continuing personal development.

Special development programmes are being devised for instructional staff to improve delivery mechanisms, curriculum design and testing systems. Training, which had its origins in apprenticeship, has now become a profession in its own right. FAS apprentice instructors are currently taking courses in Irish universities leading to the award of a National Certificate in Training and Education as a foundation for a possible National Diploma and, later perhaps, a full university degree awarded on a credits system. A number of British universities are offering M.Sc. programmes in Training, on 'distance learning' courses, or in association with some Irish universities. These developments will undoubtedly improve the status and effectiveness of the trainer/instructor but whether they will be in the best long-term interests of apprenticeship is debatable. In the final analysis, the best craftsman is made in the workplace and not in an institutional setting and the secret is more in the learning than in the teaching.

In those countries where the system is seen to be effective, where commitment is high and where the completion of an

apprenticeship confers prestige, this method of training young workers is most successful. In particular, the commitment and direct involvement of employers in areas such as curriculum content, testing and quality control (all of which reinforce that commitment), are essential. This needs to be further strengthened by a mechanism through which the costs of apprenticeship are borne mainly by employers, either directly as part of the corporate costs of enterprises, or through some form of levy. If industry has to pay, it will ensure that it gets value for its money. As the recent Culliton Report pointed out:

Nations like Germany and Switzerland have benefited enormously from apprenticeship and vocational programmes that provide a highly skilled and adaptable workforce.(8)

#### **Trends in Ireland:**

In Ireland, following the publication of the first White Paper on Manpower Policy, in 1965, in which the Government's main concern was with shortages of skilled manpower in the context of expected economic growth, apprenticeship was given a fairly high priority. This was manifested in the ensuing review of apprenticeship initiated by the new training organisation, AnCO, set up in 1967. By 1986, however, when the second White Paper on Manpower Policy was published, the period of high economic growth had ended, the economy was in recession, there was a surplus of skilled manpower, apprentice unemployment and growing numbers of young school-leavers who could not get jobs. This new White Paper acknowledged that the previous targets in relation to the provision of skilled manpower had been largely met and the new priority should be to alleviate unemployment, particularly among young people. In relation to apprenticeship, the concerns were with the effectiveness of the system,

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reducing costs, matching supply and demand and with a bigger role for employers. In general, commitment to apprenticeship waned, intake numbers declined and, although the new training and employment agency, FAS, established following the 1986 White Paper, continued with a review of apprenticeship begun by AnCO in 1984, it was not until 1990 that the Board of FAS formulated its plans for a new system.

#### **The PESP and Apprenticeship:**

The presentation of the document, Decisions of the Board of FAS for a New Apprenticeship, to the Minister for Labour in July, 1990, heralded a revival of interest in apprenticeship at national level. However, one of the proposals of the Board, i.e. the abolition of the existing levy/grant system and the imposition of a payroll levy of 0.5% in the private and in the commercial semi-state sector to fund training programmes for first time entrants into employment/apprenticeship, was resisted by some employer bodies. One of these, the Construction Industry Federation, banned the intake of apprentices by its members for a period. The whole issue of the new apprenticeship, including that of the levy, was one of the items submitted by the Government for negotiation with the social partners in the preparation of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP), published in January, 1991. The main elements of the new system were agreed at national level by the Government, the employers and the trade union movement, except for the issue of the payroll levy. This was deferred for discussion by the Central Review Committee of the PESP. Following discussions during 1991, this Committee finally agreed to a levy of 0.25% applicable to the construction, engineering, motor and printing sectors to finance the new apprenticeship system. This has still to be promulgated by the Government in a Finance Bill and is not

expected to be finalised until 1994. The inclusion of apprenticeship in a programme such as the PESP gives it a national status, and it has merit in that it provides a final 'clearing-house' for unresolved difficulties involving the Government and the social partners. However, it does introduce another layer of consultation and discussion which can result in delayed decisions and eventual compromise, as in the case of the new apprenticeship levy. There is also the danger that referral to PESP might be seen as a means of off-loading problem areas.

#### **Apprenticeship and the Education Green Paper:**

Apprenticeship was given a vote of confidence in the Report of the Industrial Review Group - the Culliton Report - published in January, 1992, with this comment re the role of FAS:

With the notable exception of its apprenticeship programmes, a good deal of what FAS does is seen to be of little relevance by industry.(9)

The Report also referred to the enormous benefits derived by countries such as Germany and Switzerland from their apprenticeship programmes. The Green Paper, Education for a Changing World, June, 1992, proposed a number of initiatives in the area of apprenticeship, including the progressive reconstitution of all vocational training programmes under an extended training system, modelled on the Dual System on which the German apprenticeship system operates (and excellent examples of which are to be found in Ireland in schemes such as those of the ESB and CIE). It provides for the establishment of an Action Group, representative of the Departments of Labour (now Employment and Enterprise) and Education and of FAS and the vocational education sector, to define and clarify their

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respective roles in initial vocational education and training, including apprenticeship. It proposes to set up a new certification and validation body, the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) which;

would have a wide remit covering all aspects of vocational training provided by both the education and training agencies, including apprenticeship training.(10)

The proposal to establish an Action Group to clarify roles is an excellent one, but there is also a need for a similiar group to be responsible for the operational management of training and vocational programmes which, like apprenticeship, take place partly in the training sector and partly in the educational sector. This group, meeting from time to time, could operate on a matrix management approach, with each of its elements taking responsibility for the implementation of an agreed programme in its own respective area.

#### **Programme for a Partnership Government, 1993:**

To what extent CEVA would provide for the accreditation of the learning experiences of the workplace, as part of the certification system, vis-a-vis academic programmes, would be an important element in determining the future prestige of apprenticeship. However, it would appear that CEVA may be still-born, for, in the joint Fianna Fail-Labour Programme for a Partnership Government, published in January 1993, it is provided that legislation will be introduced to establish a National Education and Training Certification Board, which:

will help progression between courses in the education and training systems, and help Irish workers abroad obtain jobs consistent with their qualifications.(11)

It would appear that this new Board, (provision was made for an interim board, pending the enactment of legislation), may now become the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise and Employment instead of the Department of Education, a proposal described in a press report as 'daft' by one educational source. Such an approach would mean that vocationally oriented courses would be 'market-driven', as they should be, with the end-user - the employer and the labour market - determining the competences required. As has already been stated in Chapter 16, it could be argued that it is only when the skills and knowledge learned on vocationally orientated courses in the schools and training centres match the requirements of the workplace that quality vocational education and training has taken place. The Moriarty Task Force, set up to advise on the implementation of the Culliton Report recommendations, has strongly advocated the establishment the National Certification Board and the Government has decided that it should be set up by October 1993, with a new system of certification in operation by the end of 1994.

On apprenticeship, the Programme promises to improve the present system, to introduce a standards-reached instead of a time-serving approach and to bring forward legislation 'based on existing employer and trade union agreements', (presumably the 1991 PESP agreement on a levy), to fund the new system. It is also intended to :

extend the apprenticeship scheme to give certified training to those leaving secondary education but not going on to third level. This means increasing the number of occupations where certified and structured training applies ....(12)

**Most Recent Developments:**

At the beginning of 1993, therefore, the issue of apprenticeship was addressed in no less than five major national policy documents, all of which are, apparently, strongly committed to its improvement and extension. The system is no longer to be purely a means by which young people are recruited and trained by employers to meet their own needs. The PESP aims to increase the number of apprentices by 1,000 per year in the existing designated trades, to designate further trades and to make special provision, and set intake targets, for groups such as the disadvantaged, the disabled, mature entrants and women.(13) At a time when tackling unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a national priority, apprenticeship has become an instrument of Government manpower policy.

There is, of course, a considerable amount of inertia in both the apprenticeship and the education systems and, as an initial step, the policies which have now been formulated must be distilled into a coherent and workable programme of action, with targets, responsibilities and resources clearly specified. This plan will also need, not only Government backing, but the support of the social partners and, in particular, that of the employers. Some form of Action Group, as proposed in the Education Green Paper, but which would also include employers and trade union representatives, and would be independently chaired, - a possible task for one of the new Government programme managers - will be needed to oversee implementation. Some progress has already been made and a considerable amount of planning and development work has taken place. In the curriculum area, the Board of FAS has approved a document, Curriculum Model for New Apprenticeship. Industrial surveys have been undertaken following which occupational profiles, based on core, common, specialist and personal skills have been

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prepared. Subject matter experts, including industrial representatives, have prepared curricula for a range of occupations. The Board of FAS has also approved a document, Apprenticeship Certification and Assessment System, which sets out the requirements for the award of the National Craft Certificate - of which, incidentally, over 3,600 have been issued on the basis of the criteria set by AnCO when introducing the Certificate in 1986. The new requirements involve a combined modular and competency assessment process, the former in the institution where the off-the-job module is undergone, and the latter by the employer or supervisor in the work place. According to this document, the new certification framework is designed to link in with the three European training levels: Eurolevel 1, Introductory; Eurolevel 2, Basic and Intermediate; and Eurolevel 3, Advanced. In this connection, in an article entitled, Irish-German Accord on Apprenticeship, in Issue 2, July 1993, of Interfas, the FAS Staff Newsletter, it was stated:

Recognition for Irish qualified craftspersons by Germany is on the cards following favourable reaction by the Federal German Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB) to the new FAS Curriculum Model and Assessment System for apprenticeship.

Agreement has been reached in principle to work towards bi-lateral, mutual recognition of Irish and German certificates. Further discussions are planned for September, at which time the options for recognition of trade qualifications will be refined.

In this article also, the apprenticeship system here is now referred to as 'the Irish dual system'.



But there have also been some difficulties: a number of pilot schemes planned by FAS, and based on the new system, had been held up due to internal industrial relations problems, one of the hazards associated with change. These have now been resolved and, in advertisements in the public press, FAS announced that two new apprenticeship schemes in the designated occupations of brick/stonelayer and motor mechanic commenced on a pilot basis in May, 1993. The new system for the remainder of the currently designated trades will be phased-in between September, 1993 and September, 1994. It was also announced that preparatory work is underway to expand the new apprenticeship system to cover other suitable occupations.(14) In relation to this, in a report in the Irish Times Education and Living Supplement, dated 4th. May 1993, under the heading Bank Clerks to Serve their Time, it was stated that the Minister of State for Labour Affairs was considering proposals to include bank clerks, insurance clerks and legal clerks under the new apprenticeship scheme. This would be in line with the German dual system and it would also reduce the significant gender imbalance in the apprenticeship system here at present.

With regard to the apprenticeship levy, in The Irish Times of 28th July, 1993, it was reported that, at its meeting on the previous day, the Government had approved the preparation of a Bill to impose a 0.25% levy on employers to fund the new scheme. The levy, which is expected to yield £4m. in a full year and to attract a £12m annual subvention from the EC, will apply to employers in the construction, motor, printing and engineering industries and will be payable from April, 1994. According to the report, the new scheme had been agreed by the Central Review Committee of PESP and 'will be managed by the employers under the supervision of FAS'. This decision on the management of apprenticeship represents a significant shift in control towards the system operated by the German Chambers of Commerce.

In advertisements in the public press, (The Sunday Tribune 8th. August, 1993), headed IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR EMPLOYERS AND APPRENTICESHIP APPLICANTS, FAS announced that the New Standards-Based Apprenticeship system would come into operation from September, 1993, in fifteen trades. These were: Cartonmaker; Lithographic Printer/Platemaker; Graphic Reproducer; Compositor; Bookbinder; Brick/Stonelayer; Plasterer; Painter/Decorator; Vehicle Body Repairer; Agricultural Mechanic; Aircraft Mechanic; Refrigeration Craftsperson; Sheetmetal Worker; Cabinetmaker and Woodmachinist. The remaining trades would be phased in as soon as possible.

As an interim arrangement, and pending a review to be completed in 1994, the normal duration for these apprenticeships would be four years. Each apprenticeship will have seven phases, four on-the-job with the employer and three off-the-job in a FAS Training Centre or Educational College. In certain cases, an approved in-company training centre may be used. The maximum duration of off-the-job training would generally be forty weeks. Applicants for apprenticeships must be sixteen years of age and have at least Grade D in any five subjects in the Junior Certificate examination. Provision is made for applicants without the minimum educational qualifications through the provision of pre-apprenticeship courses, or, in the case of persons over twenty-five years with three years relevant work experience, by means of assessment interviews. All apprentices must be registered with FAS and the employer's capacity to provide the appropriate training will be determined by FAS on the basis of range of work, specified equipment and special tools. The employer must also provide an experienced craftsperson to oversee the training and a suitable person approved to assess the competence of the apprentice. There will be special bursaries for the recruitment of female apprentices. Support services such as an on-the-job

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monitoring service, training packs and training and development courses for apprentice supervisors and assessors will be provided by FAS. Finally, in relation to the status of the National Craft Certificate, the advertisement states:

Only the apprentice who completes the specified phases of training and who demonstrates the achievement of the required industry standards in the assessments will be awarded the National Craft Certificate, which will be a compulsory requirement for recognition as a craftsperson as agreed in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress.

This, when implemented, will effectively introduce the concept of a licence to work as a craftsperson.

**New Legislation:**

To give effect to these arrangements in respect of the fifteen specified trades in the industrial activities covered by eight Industrial Training Orders, Statutory Instrument Number 236 of 1993, Labour Services Act 1987 - Apprenticeship Rules 1993, was promulgated to come into effect on 1st. September 1993.(15) Rules were made in respect of the following:

Minimum Age of Entry to Apprenticeship;

Minimum Entry Requirements for Apprenticeship;

Vision Test;

Prohibition of Premium;

Dismissal;

Form of Contract;

Notification (of Contract to FAS);

Training;

Prosecution of Offences;

Posting of Copies or Abstracts of Rules;

Certification of Standards.

Some elements of these new Rules are worthy of comment. No apprenticeship period is now specified so that the time-serving element has effectively been abolished. There is now no special rule governing the dismissal of apprentices; they are subject to the same labour legislation as regards dismissal, protection of employment, minimum notice and redundancy as all other workers. Provision is made for the automatic termination of an apprenticeship contract if the apprentice fails to reach the minimum qualifying standard, after three attempts, in any of the modular assessments during off-the-job training. Only apprentices who have completed the appropriate training and who have attained the specified standards will be eligible for a National Craft Certificate. The new Rules should result in a more controlled and rational system of apprenticeship in which a number of the traditional elements will have disappeared and with increased emphasis on the attainment of standards by apprentices if they are to qualify as certified craft workers.

An area which has yet to be tackled is that of the revision of apprenticeship legislation. The Commission on Technical Education, which reported in 1927, recommended that legislation on the lines of that of the Union of South Africa

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Apprenticeship Act of 1922, should form the basis of a proposed Irish apprenticeship Act. The resulting 1931 Apprenticeship Act was excessively legalistic and bureaucratic and was, partly because of this, largely a failure. A somewhat similiar legalistic approach was adopted with the 1959 Apprenticeship Act and this was carried forward into Chapter 3, Apprenticeship, of the 1967 Industrial Training Act. In the case of this latter Act, even though provision was made for the making of various new rules dealing with apprenticeship, no rules were ever made prior to those referred to in the last paragraph, and the remaining Rules in force at present are those made under the 1959 Act. Some of these were amended, and continue in operation under the transitional provisions of the 1967 Act. Whatever justification there might have been for the approach adopted in 1931, the fact is that most of the progress in apprenticeship during the period of the 1931 Act was made in areas where the Act did not apply, such as the ESB, CIE, the Defence Forces, the Irish Sugar Company and many others. Times have changed and today there is greater realisation that more can be accomplished through voluntary agreement and cooperation, in arrangements such as the PESP, than through legal methods and sanctions. When the Education Bills promised in the Green Paper are being considered, it might be opportune to address and rectify the position of apprentice/young worker legislation. What is needed today is not a legalistic approach, but nationally agreed rules or guidelines which could be enforced not, as before, through the legal system, but, possibly, through the Labour Court. Writing in the Sunday Tribune on 23rd. May 1993, Paul Tansey co-author of Training Policy in Ireland, a consultants' report prepared for the Culliton Review Group, in an article entitled, Training: Speed is not the Essence, had this to say on compulsion in training matters:

If managers and workers within firms do not own their training programme then it will be rejected, or worse, evaded. The carrot of ownership rather than the stick of compulsion is likely to effect the greatest advances in training quality.

**Conclusion:**

At the beginning of the present century, apprenticeship in Ireland had reached its nadir, only a 'wreckage' remained. It was rescued by the introduction of technical education and much of its progress during the 1900s was due to the association and cooperation which developed between these two inter-related areas of learning. It has survived a century of unprecedented social, economic and technological change to become, as the 21st. century appears on the horizon, an instrument of Government manpower policy, with a growing linkage to European developments and standards. But policies and plans, however good, exist only on paper, and much has to be accomplished if the format which has now emerged from a wide spectrum of expert opinion is to be put into operation. If this can be done effectively, then it would appear that apprenticeship, in its modern form - an integrated process of basic training, related instruction and systematic work experience, founded on a sound educational base and leading to realistic and certified levels of competence - has an exciting and secure future in Ireland. In relation to an 'Irish Dual System', however, what seems to be missing at present is a vehicle to provide that element which was essential to the success of the German system - the structure and role of the Chambers of Commerce and the 'training culture' which they exhibit. These employer bodies have statutory responsibility for vocational training, are regionally organised, self-funding and have a commitment to apprenticeship which is exemplary. In the absence

of such a vehicle here, the success of the new Irish Dual System will depend on the provision of an adequate alternative to generate and mobilize the commitment needed. This is the challenge for the future.

**Postscript:**

If the apprentice, Bel-ahe-eriba son of Ben-usallim, whose indenture to the exorcist, Nanaa-uzelli, was signed in the Babylonian city of Borsippa in 628 B.C., could be transported by time machine to modern Ireland, he would, no doubt, be amazed by the strange new world he would encounter. Except perhaps for one thing: in that bewildering and utterly changed environment he would meet at least one familiar figure - the apprentice. For, though its format has changed radically, the basic features of apprenticeship remain: the concept of teaching skills to young people through instruction by recognised 'masters', over an agreed period of time, on a contractual basis. That it has endured through the long sweep of history with its almost unimaginable changes and upheavals, adapting more or less successfully to the challenge of industrial and technological revolution, and remaining still an important part of the training systems of some of the most advanced industrial countries, says much for the relevance and value of the principles on which apprenticeship is founded.

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