

responsible for the direction of the education of craftsmen should be of special interest. The paper on "Technical Education for the Building Trades," by Mr. A. R. Sage, Principal of the L.C.C. School of Building, read before the Association, gives the views of one who, as a colleague of the late Mr. H. Richards, one of the pioneers of building trade education, has been associated with this problem for many years.

Much discussion just now centres round the question of apprenticeship in these trades, to the discouragement of which the serious diminution of operatives is said to be due, and suitable craft education would appear to be a possible solution for reducing the time taken to acquire proficiency while simultaneously providing a continuance of general education. Mr. Sage takes a wide view of the subject, and rightly lays stress on the importance of general education

and the teaching of principles underlying the crafts, giving manual dexterity a very subsidiary place. With his claim that knowledge of the reasons for craft processes will not only bring interest into tasks otherwise monotonous, but will also lead to the improvement of processes, all will agree, and while some will be found to question the desirability of attempting professional training in a technical school, few will deny that immense benefit will accrue to the professional student from attending classes designed for future craftsmen. A plea was made for greater support and interest on the part of employers of labour, who in many cases have apparently a very imperfect knowledge of what a modern school of building means. The outline of curricula suggested for students at various stages of the career should be of value to all interested in this branch of education.

Prices of Government Publications.

MANY protests have recently been made against the prohibitive prices of British Government publications, the old basis of charge—one halfpenny for a sheet of four pages—having been greatly increased by the Coalition Government. The present prices vary from 30 or 40 to about 800 per cent. above the pre-War charges; and, consequently, a large amount of valuable official information does not reach the public for whom it is intended. This is in direct opposition to the policy pursued since the year 1836, when the House of Commons accepted the following resolution of a Special Committee on Printed Papers: "That the Parliamentary Papers and Reports printed for the use of the House should be rendered accessible to the public by purchase, at the lowest price they can be furnished, and that a sufficient number of extra copies shall be printed for that purpose." From that time until about the middle of the War period, facilities were provided for the wide distribution of such papers and reports.

Up to the year 1917 a complete set of the "Papers of Both Houses of Parliament" could be purchased for an annual subscription of 20*l.*; the largest public libraries purchased such sets, while other libraries, in which complete sets were regarded as unnecessary, were able to purchase important papers at proportionate rates, if they could not be obtained gratis. All public libraries were able in pre-War days to requisition a considerable number of official publications from the Stationery Office, but the free list has been enormously reduced, the last annual Treasury grant to the Stationery Office for this purpose being the totally inadequate sum of 250*l.*

The present subscription for a "complete set of papers" is 36*l.*, but in reality the cost is several times this sum, because many papers have been removed from the "Parliamentary List," and are now called Stationery Office publications, and must be purchased separately.

It is to be remembered that the statistical and research work of the various Departments of the Government is done, at considerable cost to the nation, with the direct object of communicating the results of their investigations to the public. Further, as a minimum number of certain official documents must be printed and circulated for the benefit of members of Parliament and Government Departments, the initial cost of issuing them should not be chargeable to the purchasers; the purchasers should be charged only the extra cost of the additional copies printed.

These official publications are usually of the greatest value to the public, dealing as they do with every phase of national life: industry, agriculture, com-

merce, science and technology, education and other allied subjects, central and local administration, legislation, foreign and colonial relations, etc. It is therefore of the greatest importance that efforts should be made to secure the greatest publicity to material of national value accumulated by the State Departments; and so the question of obtaining cheap official publications is one worthy of the immediate attention of the Treasury.

The Library Association, representing all the public libraries of the United Kingdom, and through them the public at large, has urged for a long time past the necessity for easy access by the public to Government publications, and the Association views with grave concern the present serious position. A few months ago, its Council appointed a Special Committee (of which Mr. G. A. Stephen, the City Librarian of Norwich, is the honorary secretary) to consider the conditions under which the Parliamentary and Stationery Office publications are now priced and distributed to the public, and that Committee recently made representations to the Treasury in the hope that the situation might be relieved.

On Tuesday, March 4, the matter was raised in the House of Commons. Mr. Ernest Simon (Member for the Withington Division of Manchester) asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he was prepared to make a substantial reduction in the prices or to give specially favourable terms to public libraries; and Mr. Percy Alden (Member for South Tottenham) asked the Chancellor whether he had received an appeal from the Council of the Library Association on the subject of the distribution and cost of Parliamentary publications, and whether, in view of the importance of such publications to industrial workers and students of sociology, he would consider the advisability of reducing the annual subscription to the former annual payment. In reply, Mr. W. Graham (Financial Secretary to the Treasury) said: "My right hon. friend has had the appeal under consideration and has decided, in lieu of the existing arrangements under which a few publications are presented annually to some public libraries, other supplies being charged at full price, to authorise the Stationery Office to supply any Government publications in future at half the published price, or half the subscription price for a class of publications, as desired. The arrangement will apply to all public free libraries in Great Britain maintained out of the rates, and the offer is also extended to universities and university colleges in receipt of assistance from the University Grants Committee. In all cases the supply is subject to the condition that the publications are not to be resold."