

Association of Technical Institutions

PAPERS read before the annual summer meeting of the Association of Technical Institutions, held at Brighton on June 22-23, included "Apprenticeship and the Irish Apprenticeship Act", by Mr. R. R. Butler, of the Aston Technical College; "National Scheme of Foundry Education", by Mr. J. G. Pearce, director of the British Cast Iron Research Association; and "The Function and Operation of Junior Instruction Centres", by Mr. Valentine A. Bell. Mr. Bell's paper insisted that the work of the Juvenile Instruction Centres has consistently followed the general purpose of preventing "demoralisation likely to result from unemployment" and "facilitating the absorption of boys and girls into employment as soon as opportunity may occur". Mr. Bell, who has visited these centres in various parts of the country, dealt with criticism levelled against them. He did not fail to stress difficulties such as those of staff recruitment (since "there was no guarantee as to how long the centres would remain open, it was difficult to find men who had permanent jobs to take up this new work"), but his answer to the criticism so often made, namely, little good can be done where the average length of stay per student is only three weeks, is to the point: "Those who merely study statistics are easily inveigled into making rash statements. . . . I may have had 10,000 through my Centre during the past four years. Thousands may have found work within a week, but hundreds have stayed with me for six months or more, yet the average may work out at only four weeks."

Very closely allied to Mr. Bell's paper was an address given by Mr. F. N. Tribe, of the Ministry of Labour, who dealt with the educational provisions of the Unemployment Bill. He pointed out that the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance recommended that the gap between the school-leaving age and the age of entry into insurance should be bridged by lowering the age of entry into

unemployment insurance to correspond with the statutory school-leaving age. The recommendation avoided any stereotyping of age fourteen years as the proper age for leaving and suggested that contributions should be credited in respect of voluntary full-time education, and that attendance at a course of instruction should be a normal condition for the receipt of benefit by anyone less than eighteen years of age. These conditions have been accepted by the Government.

Mr. R. R. Butler indicated that while laws governing apprenticeship are in operation in Germany, Denmark, Hungary, South Africa, New Zealand, Ontario and the Irish Free State, no similar national system has been considered desirable in England. It is clear that, under rationalised conditions in industry, it is no longer possible for a master craftsman to educate his apprentice. Under conditions of mechanisation, the duties of apprenticeship fall increasingly on technical colleges. He urged an increase in full- and part-time day technical colleges and an extension of the junior trade schools on a national basis. These steps become the more necessary if, in England, we are not prepared, like the Irish Free State (Act of 1931) to adopt a legal system of apprenticeship. In any scheme, however, training for specialised jobs will be of less importance than training for adaptability to changing processes.

Mr. J. G. Pearce also underlined the importance of adaptability of mind and the power to reason correctly about the new facts and circumstances which are continually arising. The old distinction between the man of theory and the man of practice, he said, is fast disappearing. He went on to describe a national scheme of education for the founding industry. A school for training those who have already experience in the industry to be managers, foundry engineers, chemists and metallurgists is to be opened at Birmingham Central Technical College in October 1935 if sufficient students are forthcoming.

Annual Conference of the Museums Association

THE forty-fifth annual Conference of the Museums Association was held at Bristol on July 2-7, by invitation of the Lord Mayor and Corporation. The meetings were held in the Museum and Art Gallery, but the University authorities very kindly granted the delegates additional facilities. The Conference was very well attended and some two hundred and thirty members of the Association met under the presidency of Dr. Cyril Fox, director of the National Museum of Wales.

In his presidential address, Dr. Fox, in the first place, dealt with the progress of the Association during the year and the great developments at home and in the Dominions due to the generosity of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Carnegie Trust in Great Britain. He commented also on the firm and practical basis upon which the diploma scheme and the educational policy of the Association now rest. The main part of his address, however, was occupied by a plea for a National Folk Museum in Great Britain. After describing a typical Continental open-air museum (that of Skansen, Stockholm) he emphasised its advantages and cultural

effect. Dr. Fox also stressed the additional establishment of regional open-air museums to illustrate local aspects of general culture. He urged provincial curators to collect in the meantime the fast-disappearing furnishings and implements of local interest.

Following the presidential address, Dr. R. E. M. Wheeler opened a discussion on folk museums, in which he divulged that the Departmental Committee, set up according to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, has come to the conclusion that the National Folk Museum should be in London, about 10-15 acres in size, and should consist of a museum containing folk-material and an open-air coherent village-group illustrative of English country life before the Industrial Revolution.

In the afternoon Mr. J. E. Barton interested and amused the delegates with a paper on "The Education of Public Taste" and Mr. H. W. Maxwell described the steps that have been taken during his directorship to modernise the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.