

Vocational Guidance in Belgium

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The following article is one of a series of monographs appearing in the Review on vocational guidance¹, a question which, it will be recalled, appears on the agenda of the forthcoming session of the International Labour Conference. After describing the origins of the vocational guidance movement in Belgium and the progressive stages of its development, the author—who, by reason of his official functions, is particularly well-informed on this subject—gives an account of the main features of the scheme as at present operating in Belgium, and the results achieved over the last ten years.

ORIGINS

THE vocational guidance movement in Belgium has assumed an official character since the promulgation of a Royal Order of 20 February 1936 setting up a National Centre for Vocational Guidance as part of the Ministry of Education. In recognising the value and, indeed, the necessity of this aspect of educational work, the Belgian Government has paid a well-deserved tribute to the far-sighted and self-sacrificing efforts of the promoters and pioneers of a great social service.

While the credit of having set up the first organised vocational guidance services, nearly 40 years ago, falls to the United States, it was in Belgium that, in 1912, the first vocational guidance service in Europe was established, and the so-called "Brussels System" has long been familiar in many countries outside Belgium.

¹ Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. LVI, No. 4, Oct. 1947, p. 393: "Vocational Guidance in New Zealand", by R. WINTERBOURN; and Vol. LVII, Nos. 1-2, Jan.-Feb. 1948, p. 15: "Vocational Guidance for Juveniles in the United Kingdom", by H. M. D. PARKER.

Nowadays the idea of vocational guidance has taken root almost everywhere and, in spite of the unreasonable prejudices which for many years stood in the way of its practical expansion, has been adopted in many countries.

Vocational guidance is, indeed, becoming more and more essential, both to the community and to the individual. One of the main results of the several economic and social crises which have overtaken the world during the last few decades has been the increased attention paid to the urgency of remedying—or, if possible, preventing—the threatened breakdown, by attempting to achieve a better utilisation of individual capacities and, at the same time, allowing every individual to develop his abilities to the highest possible degree. Moreover, there is at present a more general awareness of the dangers involved in leaving a young generation, untrained in social responsibilities, to struggle along as best it may in the increasing complexity of modern life. We cannot risk any delay in tackling this problem—and it is certainly a difficult one—of the citizens of the future. It is still too early to say that a final solution has been found, but for many years past, here and there throughout the world, men of foresight and vision, realising the needs of the future, have been applying themselves to the new task. Though largely unnoticed by the general public, they have been patiently clearing the ground, collecting material, comparing methods and results, and laying the foundations on which the future may build.

First and foremost among such pioneers in Belgium must be mentioned the late Arthur Christiaens, who died in 1937. It was primarily due to him that the Brussels service was set up, which placed Belgium in the first rank of countries pioneering in this branch of social work. During the last thirty years of his life Christiaens devoted himself to the cause of vocational guidance, giving special attention to the practical and theoretical training of the first vocational advisers. His courses were conducted on proved scientific lines and attracted a large number of students from abroad. Among his numerous publications special mention should be made of his work on vocational guidance methods (*Méthode d'orientation professionnelle*), a work everywhere held in high esteem, and his earlier studies on particular trades (*Monographies de métiers*), which, at the time of their publication, were a real revelation to most practitioners and have since become a standard work on the application and extension of vocational guidance.

Though Belgium can indeed congratulate herself that she is now equipped with the essential bases for carrying out her plans in the field of vocational guidance, it should be remembered that the authorities came to play their part in this work only gradually, and with perhaps an excess of caution; but it may now be claimed

that in her deliberate advance Belgium has, unhurriedly and without waste, laid foundations that have successfully stood the test of time.

The present position is thus the fruit of many years' work, nothing of which has survived unless it was able to stand the test of experience; and this makes the development of vocational guidance in Belgium of very special interest. At a time when these problems are everywhere being closely examined and opinions are being exchanged for the common good, a brief description of the successive stages of their development should prove of real value.

Before the First World War

As early as 1909, the Belgian Educational Association (*Société belge de pédotechnie*) was giving special attention to the question of vocational guidance and was making known its desire that each child's career should be followed up for a certain period after leaving the elementary school; placement in apprenticeship would naturally be the first concern of any such action, and the vocational training section of the Association therefore proposed the establishment of a special service for the placing of apprentices.

In 1912, the first step was taken in this direction: a service was set up through which "the public might have children examined with a view to ascertaining their abilities and obtaining advice on the most suitable choice of a career". The setting up of this new guidance institution clearly indicated its promoters' special concern to find out the child's natural inclinations, in order to direct him or her into the most suitable studies or trade.

The problem of placement itself was not lost sight of, but only deferred, and was to be taken up again as soon as the necessary studies had been made. It was evident that placement in work is inevitably influenced by the general economic situation, as well as by the individual's preference, and if its work was to be of real value the vocational guidance service would have to be adequately informed about the state of the employment market and the nature, requirements and relative importance of the various occupations. All these questions, however, which reveal the supreme importance of "occupation studies", call for a great deal of research, costing much time and money; a voluntary society such as the Educational Association, which was without the necessary funds, could not undertake such research on its own account. It was for this reason that Christiaens advocated the establishment of a joint service for all the city wards of Brussels.

The 1914-1918 war broke out just as a subcommittee of delegates from the city wards of Greater Brussels had been set up (May 1914)

to draw up a scheme on these lines. The work had temporarily to be suspended.

During the War

The question was taken up again—in secret, as the Committee did not wish its work to be under the scrutiny of the occupying power—in October 1915, and discussions continued in the same unobtrusive way throughout the whole of the war, though, of necessity, with long intervals. On 23 February 1916 a detailed joint plan was submitted to the Committee, which paid tribute to the magnificent work which had been done. The delegates expressed their hope that the Government would take a part in the plan; the arrangements were then discussed with representatives of the workers' organisations and the Brussels Chamber of Commerce.

In 1918 the municipal authorities were secretly urged to consider the immediate need to prepare a programme of action for a scientifically organised scheme of vocational guidance, so as to ensure the systematic placing of apprentices, both youths and girls; the need, it was emphasised, was urgent, since the disastrous effects of the war would inevitably make it necessary to rebuild the economy of the country on entirely new foundations.

After the War

The Brussels Vocational Guidance Service was finally set up in 1919 for the use of all young people within the city area. Since its foundation, more than 10,000 cases have been examined. The great value of such a volume of work in developing and improving techniques and methods need hardly be emphasised.

These first developments are recounted here because they form the basis of the present structure of vocational guidance in Belgium, and because they allow a fuller realisation of the far-sightedness and perspicacity of all the pioneers who took part in making the idea a reality. In spite of the grandeur of its conception, the idea of vocational guidance had to struggle for no less than ten years against the indifference of the pre-war years, the difficulties and trials of the first World War, and the uncertainties of the liberation.

THE TRAINING OF GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

One of the tasks of the vocational guidance service set up for the Brussels area was to train staff for the local offices which it soon became clear would be necessary. The task was begun in 1920, when the first intending counsellors followed practical courses at Brussels and a course of psychology at the University of Ghent.

In 1923 the Belgian Institute of Higher Studies established a new section—the School of Labour Studies (*Ecole d'ergologie*)—for intensive study of the problems of labour. The School was given the status of a superior technical institute and has to date issued nearly 200 certificates of proficiency in the duties of vocational guidance counselling. A large proportion of these certificates were gained by foreign students who had been attracted by the high reputation of the teaching staff; these former students, are now putting into practice in their own countries—in France, in North and South America, and also in the U.S.S.R.—the principles they learned in Belgium. A number of former pupils of the School of Labour Studies are now in charge of public or private services; among these may be mentioned the branch offices in Brussels, which have used the methods recommended by the School, the “follow-up” (post-placement supervision) schemes of the placement services, the war victims’ retraining services, the orphans’ protection authorities, etc. The selection methods of many private psychotechnical institutions have for many years been supervised by former pupils of the School of Labour Studies, along lines recommended by the School; such institutions include those maintained by the Upper Katanga Mines in the Belgian Congo, the Brussels Tramways Company, the Liège Tramways Company, the Belgian Chemical Union, the Charleroi Electric Engineering Works, the National Armaments Works at Liège, the *Grands Magasins*, and so on.

It cannot, however, be denied that, important as they are, the first results are still hardly in proportion—quantitatively, that is—with the great efforts made by higher teaching institutions, the public authorities and numerous private individuals.

It would seem that this disproportion was in large part due to the uninformed attitude which for a long time persisted, especially in official circles, in regard to the general value of vocational guidance, and to the means to be adopted to make its advantages more widely known among the general public and to ensure its rapid and universal and, at the same time, rational and economical organisation.

Nothing less than the crisis, with its poverty and unemployment, was able to draw attention to the dangerous situation of an unguided younger generation, and to point to the urgent need for timely guidance.

But, against all good sense and economic advantage, the heavy punishment suffered by the improvident masses was inflicted also on the first creators of vocational guidance. Successive deflationist Governments refused, abolished or cut down whatever appropriations did not appear absolutely and immediately necessary, thus preventing any progress in the field of vocational guidance and risking its total demise.

Happily, however, a Government of "national revival" appeared in 1936, and decided to make the great effort once more and tackle the problem of youth. It decreed the extension of the school leaving age, and in February 1936 a Royal Order set up a National Centre for Vocational Guidance as part of the Ministry of Education. From now on the State was to patronise the movement, which gave every promise of continued expansion.

THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The new service was attached to the Ministry of Education because it was clearly realised that it is the school itself which offers the most fruitful ground for the work of vocational guidance; it is essential that guidance should make contact with the subject before he or she leaves the elementary school, before he takes up work or starts at a higher school. In this way, guidance can be made to cover all pupils—those intending to take up so-called intellectual work, as well as those wanting to do work of a manual kind. The expression "vocational guidance" would thus be interpreted in its widest sense.

The above does not in any way imply, however, that vocational guidance offices were not at the same time being set up in conjunction with other organisations whose work was of equal value and urgency; for example, the placement services both for juveniles and for adults, which use psychotechnical tests primarily for the selection of candidates for particular jobs and for their distribution between particular industries; or, as one might say, "job guidance".

It is in any case essential for a number of reasons that preliminary guidance at the elementary school stage—which is but the first stage in an extended process—should be carried out by a body of fully qualified counsellors trained in systematic observation, instructed in a single co-ordinated system, using the same terminology and having opportunities for regular meeting and discussion. Many experiments have been made in the past, with great expenditure of effort and money, but they have led to disappointing results owing to differences of opinion between the collaborators and the lack of any co-ordinated system. They provide a strong argument for the unified administration and methods which are essential to any scheme of vocational guidance.

The National Centre was, from the beginning, greatly concerned with establishing this essential condition and at once undertook an extensive publicity campaign throughout the country among persons and institutions likely to be interested in its work, especially

teachers, teachers' training schools at the universities, the medical profession, the social services, the armed forces, etc.

The Centre made available, without charge, an extensive library, which gave anyone so wishing the chance to learn more about the problem, and directed the studies of candidates preparing at home for the two examinations instituted by the Royal Order of 22 October 1936 for the certificate of proficiency in vocational guidance. It might incidentally be pointed out that this question of training counsellors, being also an educational problem, was a second reason for attaching the vocational guidance service to the Ministry of Education.

The appeal for candidates made at the beginning of each of the three courses in 1938, 1942 and 1945 was attended by complete success and brought in a large number of applications from every part of Belgium and from persons in all walks of life. About 200 certificates—a quarter of them to women—were granted by the central juries organised by the State, which included several well-known specialists.

So that it might later be in a position to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date documentation service, the Centre collected a large amount of information concerning publications and institutions, curricula and examinations, public and private employment openings, studies on particular careers, foreign methods of vocational guidance, etc. As early as 1937 the Centre organised an exhibition of equipment and documents used in vocational guidance in various European and overseas countries; counsellors and others profited greatly from this display, which, incidentally, served to popularise the question among the general public.

From its very first days the Centre has offered its services to parents and teachers by sending out ministerial circulars, publishing announcements in the press, and so on. The large number of requests for information and advice which were addressed to the Centre gave immediate proof of the need for such a service and drew the attention of the authorities to the desirability of setting up branch offices.

Though working with very slender financial resources—the first Government credit voted to the service in 1936 was only 5,000 Belgian francs (about £30)—the Centre reached its first objectives in a very short time. It had been set up at a specially favourable moment, answering a need felt by both families and the Government, and played an important part in developing the new specialised service which has since become indispensable.

The important role which was gradually assumed by the Centre later led the Government to take a greater interest in the training of new counsellors. It was considered that candidates for higher appointments in the vocational guidance service should have had

a University education, and a Royal Order of 13 January 1947 provided for preparatory courses in this field in the higher teachers' training schools at the universities.

University Degrees in Vocational Guidance and Selection

The new sections for vocational and educational guidance set up in the universities now give degrees and technical diplomas in vocational guidance and selection.

No candidate is accepted unless he has passed the University entrance examination in philosophy and letters, in science, in natural or medical science, civil engineering, political and social science, or education ; or any other scholastic, legal or scientific examination considered by the Council of the Institute to be of equal standing.

The examination is taken in two stages, the period of the course being at least two years. The subjects required are :

- (1) principles of biology and general physiology (including demonstrations) ;
- (2) psychology, including related aspects of human anatomy and physiology ;
- (3) experimental psychology ;
- (4) comparative psychology ;
- (5) psychology of children and adolescents ;
- (6) psychological and experimental educational science ;
- (7) statistics in their application to psychology ;
- (8) principles of psychiatry, with particular reference to psychopathology of children ;
- (9) human biometry ;
- (10) physiology and hygiene in relation to work ;
- (11) occupational geography of Belgium and the Belgian Congo ;
- (12) principles, methods, techniques and organisation of vocational guidance and selection ;
- (13) general and particular study of individual occupations ;
- (14) documents for the use of counsellors, including teaching methods ;
- (15) social studies, with particular reference to educational guidance and vocational selection ;
- (16) advanced social studies, with reference to two special subjects to be chosen among the following :
 - (a) experimental psychology ;

- (b) psychological and experimental educational science ;
- (c) occupational studies.

(17) practical and field work in this connection.

Candidates have furthermore to submit a thesis on a question connected with one of the subjects included in the examination. Before the diploma in vocational guidance and selection is granted, the candidate must produce a certificate to show that he or she has actively worked for a total of not less than 60 hours in a university vocational guidance service or any other service recognised by the Council of the Higher Institute for Educational Science.

The holder of a degree in educational science may qualify in those subjects not included in his previous studies by a single examination taken at least one year after being admitted to his degree.

WORK OF THE OFFICES

At the same time that it was providing for the training of a body of counsellors, the National Centre had to organise a preliminary network of offices throughout the country.

This latter task was carried out by means of detailed statutory regulations. A Royal Order of 21 August 1937, still in force, set out the conditions of organisation and operation to be complied with by all juvenile vocational guidance offices applying for recognition by the State. Among other conditions, it is required that every such office must be :

- (1) established in suitable and accessible premises of its own and possessed of the necessary furniture and equipment ;
- (2) available to all persons without charge ;
- (3) directed by a vocational guidance counsellor of Belgian nationality and holding an official certificate of proficiency ;
- (4) open to inspection by the State ;
- (5) conducting a reasonable amount of business, and answering a genuine need.

It is also specified that the vocational guidance consultation provided must include :

- (a) a thorough medical examination ;
- (b) an enquiry into family background and school record ;
- (c) a psychotechnical examination ;
- (d) the establishment of an individual dossier ;

(e) written communication of the results of the consultation to the head of the family or such person as may be properly authorised.

In connection with the psychological test, it should be noted that the equipment and apparatus which must be held by every office engaged in vocational guidance must by law include medical equipment and all necessary apparatus (instruments, tests, etc.) for testing sense organs, sensory and motor reactions, intelligence, scholastic attainments and character.

This last condition, together with the obligation of all offices recognised by the State to conform to a model internal system of work, and to submit an annual report, ensure in practice that their work is technically and administratively uniform.

This aiming at uniformity is characteristic of the Belgian system, and is exemplified in the detailed instructions for the application of the Royal and Ministerial Orders, which refer, for example, to the appointment and functions of the administrative boards, the chief counsellor, the doctor, the executive staff (nurses, etc.), and the equipment, premises and work of the offices (age at which tests are made, first full examination, confirmatory test, prohibition on charging of fees, and keeping of records) and the method of calculating Government grants.

Government Grant

For the purpose of calculating the annual cash grant, part-time offices are classified as follows: (a) third class offices, with an annual minimum of 100¹ individual examinations; (b) second class offices, with an annual minimum of 200 individual examinations; (c) first class offices, with an annual minimum of 300 individual examinations.

At present these classes are receiving a block grant of respectively 8,000, 10,000 and 12,000 francs, plus a sum in proportion to the work done; in 1948 this is to be about 50 francs for each full examination. The State grant covers roughly one third of the expenses of the offices, the remainder being borne by the sponsors themselves (private individuals or public authorities) and to a very small extent, in the case of independent offices, by financial assistance from the provincial and local administrative authorities.

¹ This figure of 100 was established in the first place in order to promote the setting up of offices in the less densely populated regions of the country; it has proved entirely justified by the results.

Present Position

In 1947 the number of offices recognised by the State was as follows :

(a) French speaking districts : 26 offices, 10 organised by the public authorities (provinces and communes) and 16 by private initiative (especially the Young Christian Workers movement).

(b) Flemish speaking districts : 41 offices, 38 organised by the Young Christian Workers. For 1948 permission has recently been granted to set up 11 new services, (4 provincial services, 3 communal and 4 independent) of which 9 are for the French language.

RESULTS OF THE FIRST 10 YEARS (1936-1946) ¹

An enquiry recently carried out by the Central Service shows that the vocational guidance offices recognised by the State have, in the last ten years, carried out full examination of nearly 100,000 cases.

Before analysing the results set out in the following table it should be emphasised that they refer to a single system of offices organised on a uniform plan and managed by a staff using the same technical language, the same well-tried methods and the same formulae, and reproducing their results according to uniform rules.

General Conclusions

The general conclusions arising from this wide enquiry, which, we consider, satisfies the conditions of the law of averages, uniformity of method and homogeneity of groups, are summarised in the table below.

The average age of the boys and girls examined was 13-14 years.

The number rejected on medical grounds was 8 per cent. for boys and 6 per cent. for girls ; on scholastic and psychological grounds 12 per cent. for boys and 8 per cent. for girls, and for economic reasons 2 per cent. for boys and 1.5 per cent. for girls.

If one accepts the estimate that two thirds of the rejections on scholastic grounds were, in fact, attributable to medical defects, it will be seen that the need for medical examination is clearly indicated in 15 and 12 per cent. respectively of cases. It has not yet

¹ During the second World War the Service avoided any kind of contact with the occupying power, or any action likely to assist the Germans, and merely retained routine administrative relations with the offices which had been recognised by the State. Between 1940 and 1947 it admitted only a small number of privately organised agencies, the loyalty of which was beyond suspicion. No reorganisation or centralisation was carried out during the war period, nor, in fact, has any such action been taken since.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN BELGIUM, 1936-1946

	Number of candidates given full examination	Number rejected on medical grounds ¹	Number rejected on scholastic or psychological grounds ²	Number rejected for economic reasons	Cases in which examination confirmed expressed preference
A. Analysis by language group					
<i>French language offices (24)</i>					
Boys	25,697	2,507	2,092	641	13,700
Girls	12,340	767	705	156	7,391
Total	38,037	3,274	2,797	797	21,091
<i>Flemish language offices (39)</i>					
Boys	40,966	2,589	4,687	757	27,105
Girls	14,789	840	1,484	242	10,617
Total	55,755	3,429	6,171	999	37,722
Total for whole country .	93,792	6,703	8,968	1,796	58,813
B. Analysis according to sex					
<i>Boys :</i>					
French language . . .	25,697	2,507	2,092	641	13,700
Flemish language . .	40,966	2,589	4,687	757	27,105
Total	66,663	5,096	6,779	1,398	40,805
<i>Girls :</i>					
French language . . .	12,340	767	705	156	7,391
Flemish language . .	14,789	840	1,484	242	10,617
Total	27,129	1,607	2,189	398	18,008
Total for whole country .	93,792	6,703	8,968	1,796	58,813

¹ The methods used for medical examinations are based on the conclusions of the international Congress on technical education held in Rome in 1936.

² Psychotechnical examination consists of : (1) thorough examination of sense faculties (sight, hearing, muscular development, natural motor and psychomotor reactions); (2) test of mental faculties (concentration, visual and auditory memory, visualisation, complex intellectual problems, " practical " intelligence) and character.

been possible to make a detailed analysis of the medical reports, but many of them agree that this is the age at which most defects become apparent. This emphasises the importance and, in fact, the necessity of medical attention in adolescence, both to prevent and to cure.

The following figures will be of interest in this connection. Out of 2,000 individuals examined the following cases were noted among

others : muscle or bone defects, 252 ; lung defects (including 32 tuberculosis cases), 288 ; defects of circulation, 93 ; of the digestive system, 110 ; of sight (including 50 cases of colour blindness), 320 ; of hearing, 110.

Vocational guidance advice confirms 60 per cent. of all preferences previously expressed by boys and 65 per cent. of preferences expressed by girls.

Follow-Up

A first check on the subsequent activities of subjects examined during recent years by a number of the larger offices shows that 80 per cent. of young persons took positive action on the advice given, and that 90 per cent. of these have expressed satisfaction. This means that the proportion of successes recorded by vocational guidance was something over 70 per cent.

On the other hand, several changes of school or work within a short space of time are observed in the case of subjects who failed to follow the advice of the service.

These figures will no doubt be of still greater value when they are more detailed and when the systematic follow-up of examinations, at present being organised, allows further important conclusions to be drawn. But these general results are already extensive enough to draw attention to the work of vocational guidance, with its high purpose of ensuring the protection and full development of every human being.

STATE EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE SERVICE

The overcrowding of many educational establishments, the many requests from parents for information about study courses and careers open to young persons, and the often considerable proportion of failures in higher schools and secondary and technical schools, have all pointed to the need for improving the general organisation of an educational system which no longer appears to answer present needs.

For example, in a particular group of secondary schools where an enquiry was recently held to ascertain whether it would be advisable to set up a regional educational guidance office, the number of girls was 900, as against 1,200 boys. This fact emphasises the importance of educational guidance for girls. In the same group of schools it was also noted that the number of pupils then studying "rhetoric"—that is to say, completing their sixth and last year in the humanities—was only one fifth of the number beginning the course. These two facts are, in themselves, an eloquent plea for a better

method of selecting the children for the various school courses ; and advice at the proper time by a guidance officer, to sort out and direct the pupils, would seem clearly desirable.

Such preventive action, if generally applied, would no doubt help to reduce the regrettable effects of too many boys and girls choosing particular subjects, especially in secondary schools, without any proper check as to their real aptitudes or abilities.

First Results of the State Educational Guidance Offices

In two of the offices recently set up on a trial basis in secondary schools (the Charleroi Athenaeum and the Etterbeek-Brussels Athenaeum) a preliminary psychotechnical investigation was made, together with a general knowledge test at the same time as the school examinations were being held. A classification of pupils based on this investigation was found to correspond in 85 per cent. of cases with the results of the usual end-of-term examinations. It should be pointed out that the guidance officers had carried out this experiment in classes in which none of the pupils were known to them, and with extremely limited equipment ; the results obtained are thus all the more significant and invest the new methods of educational guidance with important preventive possibilities. If such guidance is to be fully effective, it should in future be applied at the beginning of the school year, when pupils are being assigned to classes, or, if possible, even earlier.

These considerations, and the results obtained over the last ten years, have led the Ministry of Education to set up new educational guidance offices. At the present moment the following are in process of organisation : in secondary schools, at Charleroi, Etterbeek, Antwerp, Ghent and Pâturages ; in technical schools, at the State Vocational College (*Musée professionnel*) at Morlanwelz, and the State technical schools at Diest and Hasselt.

Medical and Social Services

The organisation of educational guidance in secondary and technical schools has drawn attention to the urgent need to attach medical and social services to the new vocational guidance offices, which will, in addition to the services of a vocational counsellor, be able to call on those of a doctor, a nurse and a welfare worker, and are now known as " psycho-medico-social centres ".

It is through the vocational guidance activities practised in the State secondary and technical schools that this valuable collaboration has been achieved ; hitherto it had existed on an unofficial basis only, since up to that time only elementary education had been subject to statutory medical inspection.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

General Administration. The general administrative services are naturally anxious to improve the recruitment of State employees and wish to ensure a better organisation of the public services ; they have therefore recently undertaken a study of the question of psychotechnical tests in the recruitment and appointment of State employees.

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. During the last two years this Ministry has organised, in the employment exchanges, sections to give juveniles advice on careers. At the present moment, 13 such sections have been organised and are developing satisfactorily. A National Committee, including psychotechnical experts, has been appointed to co-ordinate the work of the new sections, which are maintaining close contact with the vocational guidance offices recognised by the Ministry of Education and with the apprenticeship agencies.

The sections are trying to set up their own psychotechnical services, but their praiseworthy endeavours have hitherto been frustrated by a lack of funds and equipment.

A new step of great promise has just been reported ; in December 1947 a Study Centre for Human Problems of Work was set up in Brussels, under the auspices of the Government, the Federation of Belgian Industries and the trade unions. The Centre has on its Committee various representatives of employers, workers and the universities, and a number of technical advisers. Among the most important points on its programme it has included vocational guidance, selection, training and retraining.

Ministry of Economic Affairs. Apprenticeship under contract of employment is under the authority of this Ministry. Regulations have recently been adopted to make the conclusion of a contract of apprenticeship subject to the production of a certificate issued as a result of a vocational guidance examination by an office recognised by the State.

Ministry of Communications and Ministry of Public Health. A Royal Order of 1 July 1946 regulates the selection and subsequent observation of drivers of vehicles used for passenger transport. Recent measures of a similar kind have been taken in connection with air transport workers. In both cases, psychotechnical tests are specified in the regulations.

Transport. The Belgian National Railways Company and the Tramways Companies have had their own psychotechnical services for some years.

National Defence. The universal success of psychotechnical tests during the war, both for civil mobilisation and military service, led to the establishment in Belgium, by Royal Order of 1 March 1947, of an Army Centre for Psychotechnical Studies and Research, to organise the most rational allocation of recruits to the different branches of the forces.

The Army Education Service is at the same time working hard to provide servicemen with all desirable information—pamphlets, photographs, films, etc.—to encourage them to take an interest in the question of a career while they are still in the army. At the end of their military service they can take advantage, if they so wish, of vocational guidance tests organised to assist servicemen in their return to civilian life.

The Army Welfare Service also keeps in close contact with the military and civil vocational guidance services.

Ministry of Reconstruction and War Victims. (This covers all persons disabled, crippled or orphaned by the war, and ex-prisoners of war.) Through its assistance to social work of various kinds this Ministry takes a very active part in psychotechnical work.

Colonies. In view of the heavy expense involved in sending an agent to the Belgian Congo, the great majority of companies operating in the colonies never recruit for any appointment without seeking psychotechnical advice. Over a period of many years this precaution has proved to be of the greatest value.

Justice. The problem of rehabilitating criminals, and especially young offenders, continues to be studied very carefully, especially with regard to systematic psychological observation. Special reform prisons have established and have enjoyed the assistance of several famous psychiatrists and teachers with psychotechnical training.

PUBLICITY AND REFRESHER LECTURES

In June 1947 the Ministry of Education organised a day's course of lectures open to all vocational guidance counsellors throughout the country. The meeting was held in Brussels as part of the international exhibition of modern teaching equipment, and was a great success. A large gathering enjoyed the opportunity to see a publicity film made by one of their own number for the use of teachers, families and the public authorities; and lecturers from the University of Ghent gave public demonstrations of experimental psychology for the assessment of character, a subject which is being actively studied in a number of countries.

An International Congress was held in Brussels at about the same time under the auspices of the International Academy of

Legal and Social Medicine, the agenda of which also included several reports concerning vocational guidance in relation to medicine.

An International Vocational Guidance Congress was held at Namur in October 1947 under the auspices of the Government of the province and with the active co-operation of the Namur vocational guidance office.

Lecture-days were also organised in Brussels by the Standing Committee on Public Education and by the Young Christian Workers' Movement (J.O.C.).

Various industrial associations wishing to encourage the recruitment of juvenile labour, for example, the Building Federation and the Textiles Federation, have prepared and published at their own expense a number of publicity pamphlets on the industries concerned.

The Committee set up by private initiative to organise the training of work supervisors in industry (C.O.F.C.E.) also indoctrinates its members—largely directors and representatives of commercial and industrial firms—in the advantages of vocational guidance and selection. A publicity film is at present being prepared at the initiative of the Ministry of Education.

CONCLUSIONS

These great efforts reflect the anxiety of the public authorities and of private individuals to ensure Belgium's complete rehabilitation and her future prosperity in the new world which is taking shape before our eyes, a world in which fundamental changes are creating new needs. No reconstruction plan can be conceived without reference to vocational guidance, which aims at placing every individual where he will make full use of his abilities, at assisting his freely-made choice, and giving him advice to the best advantage of both himself and the community. Vocational guidance thus provides an answer to essential needs, individual, social and economic.

From the social point of view, every deviation from the true course, and every failure to make good in life which is added to the debit column of a country's balance sheet, cannot but throw an additional burden on social costs. This is a consideration of special importance in an industrial country like Belgium, whose wealth lies in her coal and her manpower.

In spite of the difficulties arising from the general dislocation caused by the war, Belgium has since the liberation brought into being, as part of a comprehensive social security plan, many bold acts of social legislation. The success of these measures will depend directly on the industrial output of all workers without distinction,

since their finances can only be raised from the individual contributions of workers and employers. This means that attention should be given without delay to the serious consequences which would result in the future if the population were to decline in number or in quality. In Belgium, as everywhere, it would be disastrous if the future burdens of social security—pensions, holidays, unemployment and sickness benefits—had to be borne by a reduced and unskilled working population. If we do not take steps in time we shall condemn the youth of today to be still at work in the year 2000 to satisfy the financial demands of a social security scheme which had originally been organised on their behalf; it is therefore of supreme importance, both in the general interest and in that of every worker, that we should ensure the maximum productivity in industry, commerce and administration and, in a word, make use of every available skill.

If we are to achieve this aim we must everywhere restore work to a place of honour. It must be realised by everyone that work, which is never either purely manual or purely intellectual, is always honourable, of whatever kind it may be. In this respect, vocational guidance—a work of social harmony and independent of any particular policy or philosophy—will be a precious contribution to any plan designed to help every citizen, whatever his place in society, to make a worthy use of his life. This noble aim should itself be sufficient to establish the value of vocational guidance, even if it had no other claims.

In the event, however, it will be the guidance personnel alone who will make or mar success, and it would be foolish indeed to think that their task is easy. There is still much to be done in the world before men can be given an education and training that will allow them to adapt themselves continually, without unmerited suffering, to the needs of economic development. There is still much to be done in avoiding waste of time, money and energy; in making effective use for the common good of each man's individual worth; and in eliminating inhuman conditions of existence by overcoming prejudice and selfishness. These are but so many psychological and technical problems which, together with a hundred other social measures, need the efforts of a numerous band of counsellors—skilled, independent, determined, enterprising and high-minded—who must for ever be striving to develop and improve a system which, by its nature, can never be perfect.
