



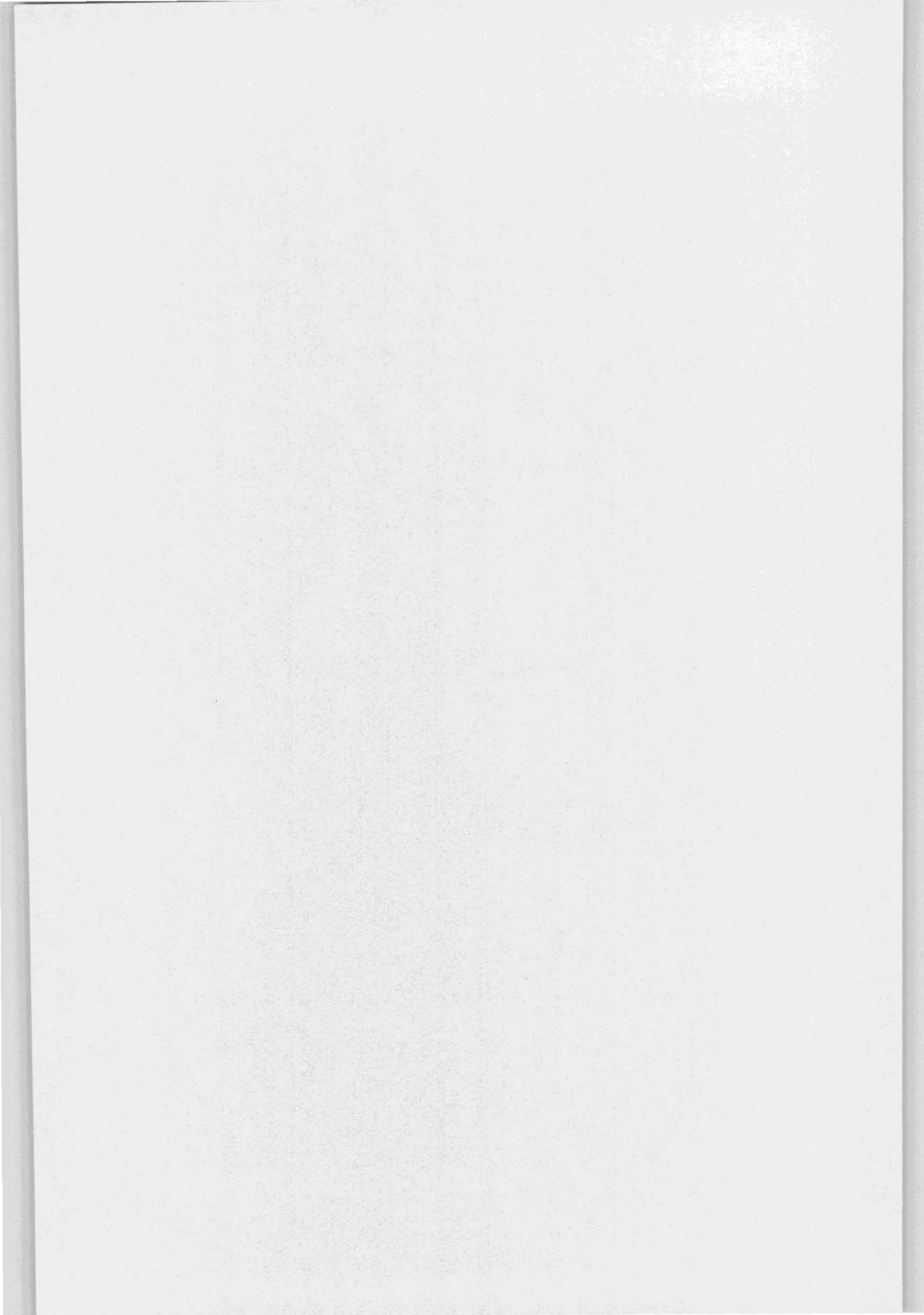
London School of Economics & Political Science
WORKING PAPERS IN ECONOMIC HISTORY

**“BLIND ALLEY” EMPLOYMENT AND THE ROLE OF ADOLESCENT
LABOUR FORCE EXPERIENCE IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN LATE
19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY ENGLAND**

David Mitch

Number: 17/94

February 1994



Working Paper No. 17/94

**"Blind Alley" Employment and the Role of
Adolescent Labor Force Experience in Skill
Development in Late 19th and Early 20th
century England**

David Mitch

©David Mitch,
Economic History Department,
London School of Economics.

February 1994

David Mitch
Department of Economic History
London School of Economics
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE
United Kingdom

Phone: +44 (0)71 955 7081

Fax: +44 (0)71 955 7730

Additional copies of this working paper are available at a cost of £2.50. Cheques should be made payable to 'Department of Economic History, LSE' and sent to the Departmental Secretary at the address above.

Abstract: From the late 1890s until the second world war in England, extensive attention was given both by social reformers and by actual government policy to the putative problem of "blind alley occupations," occupations held primarily by adolescents and that were viewed as providing little training or channelling into occupations deemed appropriate for adult workers. This paper examines blind alley employment during this period and considers the implications for the role that adolescent labor market experience has played in skill development. Key issues include whether skills acquired during adolescence were especially strategic for subsequent labor market experience and whether adolescents or their parents were capable of making appropriate employment choices. Evidence is presented comparing the experiences of adolescents in blind alley occupations with a more general sample of adolescents. Public policy at the time and longer term trends in blind alley employment are also briefly reviewed.

By the late 1890's and continuing through at least World War II, social commentators in England lamented the decline of apprenticeship and decried the consequences of a common pattern of adolescent labor market experience, time spent in so-called "blind alley" occupations. Blind alley occupations were defined as those which employed primarily adolescent labor and which paid relatively well, especially relative to adolescent positions offering training, but which did not develop either skill or good work habits. Messenger and errand boys, street sellers, newsboys, and shopboys were all frequently cited examples of those in blind alley occupations. The concern raised was that youths in blind alley occupations found themselves in their late teens and early twenties, earning wages too low for what they would expect as young adults, yet without having acquired skills that would facilitate acquiring a suitable adult job. The extent to which the problem faced by blind alley youths in the transition to adult work has been portrayed as falling victim to outright unemployment or a matter of thwarted skill development and missed opportunity varied with the commentator.¹

The issue of blind alley employment in early twentieth century Britain is of more than parochial historical interest. It provides insight into factors affecting choice of employment and the acquisition of skill, and highlights the extent to which choices made during adolescence could be of especially strategic importance for subsequent labor market experience. These are issues that continue to be discussed in nations throughout the world at the end of the twentieth century.

¹For early twentieth century discussions of the problem of blind alley labor see, R.H. Tawney, "The Economics of Boy Labour," in *Problems of Boy Life*, ed. by J.H. Whitehouse (London, 1912); Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life & Labour: The Manufacture of Inefficiency* (London, 1914); and Reginald Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship* (London, 1911).

The Adolescent Labor Market in England in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Century

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century England, as probably in most times and places, adolescence was for most males and many females a period of transition from partial to full labor force participation. Census results for 1901 and for 1931 indicate similarly that the ages between 13 and 16 were when most adolescents went from limited to majority labor force participation. A similar result holds for the second half of the nineteenth century.²

²Rates of Labor Force Participation during Adolescence

The 1901 census reports the following labor force participation rates:

Males	10-13	14-15	15-19	20-24	25-34
	10.3	67.5	91.8	97.4	98.3
Females	10-13	14-15	15-19	20-24	25-34
Single	5.2	39.5	66.7	73.5	70.2
Married	-	-	11.9	10.9	10.0
% Married	0	0	1.6	27.4	66.0

The Census for 1931 gives some indication of participation rates for that year:

	14	15	16-17
Boys	52.8	74.9	88.7
Girls	40.4	60.7	76.0

See, Political and Economic Planning, *The Entrance to Industry* (London, 1935).

The censuses of 1851, 1861, and 1871 all indicate that the proportion of males aged 10 to 15 reporting an occupation was a little over one third while the proportion of males aged 15 to 20 reporting an occupation was just over 90 percent. For the same three census years, about 20 percent of females aged 10 to 15 reported an occupation compared with about two thirds of those aged 15 to 20. The 1851 census of education, based on a sample of 253,425 children provides a more detailed breakdown for each year of age between 3 and 14. This breakdown indicates that it was between the ages of 11 and 14 when males went from limited to majority participation in the labor force and females close to majority participation. In this sample, 20 percent of

The traditional view of how adolescents would enter the world of work, acquire skills, and be tracked into adult employment was through apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship as an institution can be traced back in some form at least as early as the middle ages. It was given legal form by the Statue of Artificers in the 16th century with apparently widespread applicability. Most accounts suggest that enforcement had lapsed by the mid-18th century, and in 1814, the apprenticeship statute was formally repealed by Parliament. Formal apprenticeship did continue throughout the nineteenth century. How widespread it was by the end of the nineteenth century is uncertain, though some authors claim it was still common.³ By the early nineteenth century, alongside of whatever formal apprenticeship programs were in existence, a variety of occupations seem to have established more informal channels for training adolescents and providing them with ways of entry; mining and textiles are two notable examples.⁴

By the early twentieth century in England, there was a general perception that apprenticeship had fallen markedly into decline as an institution. This was often attributed to the effect of division of labor, segmentation and consequent deskilling and focus on detail work which obviated the need for extended training or understanding of the overall production process for a particular product.

11 year old boys reported an occupation, while 63 percent of 14 year old boys did so. In the same sample, 11 percent of 11 year old girls reported an occupation compared with 41 percent of 14 year old girls.

It should be kept in mind that these results are based on status as reported on a particular census date. They do not necessarily reflect permanent entry into the labor force or continuous participation in the labor force either for the year in question or throughout the remainder of adolescence.

³See Bernard Elbaum, "Why Apprenticeship Persisted in Britain But Not in the United States," *Journal of Economic History* vol.49, no.2 (June, 1989).

⁴See Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class, 1870-1914*.

Claims of "Blind Alley" Occupational Tracks for Adolescents

It was asserted by many observers at the turn of the twentieth Century, that the decline of apprenticeship caused problems for the functioning of the youth labor market. One particular concern was the apparent proliferation of so-called blind alley occupations for adolescents, occupations that would pay well for teenage occupations, but would not lead to suitable adult employment.

R.H. Tawney traced concerns about the adverse effects on subsequent adult employment of the wrong kind of adolescent employment back at least as far as the early nineteenth century and one suspects that the issue was around in some form well before the end of the nineteenth century.⁵ But the most extended concern about the problem seems to have been voiced at the very end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. The reports at the very end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, the Report of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education on Attendance at Continuation Schools, and the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption from School attendance drew focused attention on the problem of adolescent employments for subsequent careers.⁶

The basic concern with Blind Alley employment was one of thwarted skill development. This thwarting could take a variety of forms, from complete inability to enter more than an unskilled occupation to inadequate development of skill for a skilled job one was able to enter. One useful statement of the problem was provided

⁵See Tawney, "Economics of Boy Labour," p.3.

⁶For a survey of government inquiries into problems of adolescent employment see Spencer J. Gibb, "Recent Parliamentary and Other Inquiries Concerned with Problems of Boy Life," in J.H. Whitehouse ed. *Problems of Boy Life* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1912).

by Spencer Gibb, an early twentieth century social commentator. He said of blind alley work:

It offers no training, and leads to no career. In cases in which it does seem to offer some sort of prospect, that prospect is accidental and undependable; it rests upon the chance that the boy in the course of his work may be brought into contact with possible prospective employers. It lacks any organic connection with settled adult industry, and this industrial isolation is its one constant factor amid its infinite variety of form and condition.⁷

According to R.H. Tawney's statement of the problem:

the work which they [adolescent boy labourers] perform is usually entirely non-educational and gives no kind of industrial training, either general or special, such as to enable the worker to find a fresh situation when he leaves it. This is obviously true of the messenger, the milk-boy, and the van-boy. It is also true to an extent which is rarely realised of the boys who are employed in some kind of labouring capacity in factories and works.⁸

According to the Report on the Apprenticeship question:

At the present time, at the age of eighteen, after a four years' course of employment, whose chief characteristics are the long hours, the lack of supervision, and the total absence of any educational influence, the lad is a distinctly less valuable article in the labour market than when he was when he left school four years previously. His only asset is represented by greater physical strength, accompanied probably by a marked decrease in general health and vigour. He has lost the intelligence and aptitude of the boy, and remains a clumsy and unintelligent man, fitted for nothing but unskilled labour, and likely to become sooner or later one of the unemployed.⁹

And according to the Report on Boy Labour:

⁷Spencer J. Gibb, "Boy Labour: Some Studies in Detail," in Whitehouse ed. *Problems of Boy Life*, p.58.

⁸Tawney, "Economics of Boy Labour," p.33.

⁹Cited in Reginald Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.128.

The Injury done to these boys is not that they are compelled as men to devote themselves to low-skilled labour, but that from the more or less specialized nature of the work which has employed this boyhood, they are unfitted to become good low-skilled labourers.¹⁰

How Extensive Was Blind Alley Employment in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries?

Was blind alley employment really widespread enough to seriously thwart skill development and to impede labor market prospects for significant numbers of English adolescents at the turn of the twentieth century?

Perhaps the most easily identifiable so-called blind alley occupation was that of messenger. In the 1901 census, 71 percent of males reporting the occupation of messenger/porter were under the age of 20. The implied argument used by contemporaries in identifying this as blind alley is that with such a large proportion of this occupation taken up with those under the age of 20, there would be no positions made available for incumbents as they aged through normal processes of attrition and retirement.¹¹ In the 1901 census, 20.6 percent of occupied males aged 14 were messengers, and 4.5 percent of occupied males aged 15 to 19 were messengers.¹² In no other specific occupation listed in the census was over 50 percent of the labor force under the age of 20. Other occupations could have had some blind alley tendencies, with about 18 percent of the total male labor force aged 10 to 20, if significantly more than 18 percent of the labor force in a given occupation were between age 10 and 20, it might have led to a situation where youth would tend to be forced out when reaching the age of majority. Other service occupations in street

¹⁰cited in *ibid.*, p.128.

¹¹Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, pp.147-48.

¹²See Cyril Jackson, "Report on Boy Labour," *Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress*, Appendix, Vol. XX, British Parliamentary Papers, 1909, [Cd. 4632], p.36.

selling and so on do not seem to have been a large proportion of the total, although some in such occupations may not have been actually recorded. Although the relatively large proportion of 14 year olds employed as messengers allows for some possibility of the impact of blind alley labor, given the relatively low proportion in the 15 to 19 age bracket, this evidence by itself would not seem to support the view of a problem of great magnitude.

However, if large cities are considered, and commentators on blind alley labor focused on the urban situation, the case for the importance of the problem is stronger. Bray's compilation of a survey of London school leavers between 1906 and 1908 found that about half of them between the ages of 14 and 18 became messengers, errand boys, or shop assistants.¹³

And other assessments for both London and other cities indicate that such occupations were widespread involving at least a third of all school leavers.¹⁴

Blind alley employment seems to have been perceived as far less of a problem in rural areas, because teen age farm employment typically had some links to adult employment. Bray offered the following assessment:

a boy in rural districts enjoys greater opportunities of continuity of employment in the passage from youth to manhood than he does in the towns....There is good reason to believe that the prospects of an all-round training are more favourable in a village than in a town. The fact, already mentioned, that immigrants from rural districts obtain the better positions in London trades, especially in the building trades, would seem to justify this conclusion. There is also the general consideration that rural districts are always nearly a century behind the industrial development of the towns, and represent therefore an older

¹³See Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, pp.114-118.

¹⁴See Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, pp.151-161; Cyril Jackson, "Report on Boy Labour,"; Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour: The Manufacture of Inefficiency* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1914).

condition of affairs. Workshops are smaller, the gulf between man and employer less impassable, and the old paternal relation between boy and master more possible of attainment. We may therefore assume, without much risk of error, that training is better in rural districts than in towns.¹⁵

Returns to parliament for 1899 confirm the basic assessment of more blind alley positions in urban than rural areas. If errand, cart, boat boy category and the newsboy and street vendor category are defined as clear blind-alley positions, then these returns indicate that in London, 44 percent of all boys leaving school entered these two categories; in other large urban and manufacturing districts the percentage was 25 percent, while in rural and small urban districts it was only 16 percent. If positions in shops are also defined as blind alley then the overall percentage in such occupations rises to 58 percent in London, 38 percent in other large urban and manufacturing districts and only 26 percent in rural and small urban districts.¹⁶

Why was Blind Alley Employment Perceived as a Problem

The most serious indictment of blind alley occupations was not that those who held such occupations were permanently stuck in them or condemned to perpetual unemployment but one of lost opportunities for development of skill and suitable work habits. It was commonly asserted that even by spending just 2 or 3 years in a blind alley occupation, important opportunities for skill development were lost, given the strategic value of adolescence for this purpose. Bray provides one useful statement of the problem:

The period of the next four years -- that is, from fourteen to eighteen -- forms the most critical time of their career. It is during these four years that the boy must, if ever, have taken the first steps towards learning a trade. During this interval his physical strength must mature, his character take on itself a more or less permanent set, and the question

¹⁵Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, pp.162-64.

¹⁶Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.163.

whether his education shall represent something more than a faint shadow of early impressions shall be finally determined...¹⁷

According to two other early twentieth century commentators, Gibb and Whitehouse:

The years of adolescence, squandered in purposeless work, can never be recovered. They cast to waste all that the previous schooling has done, and at last throw the boy back upon the State in early manhood, unprovided, unfit, and unemployable.¹⁸

Why these years were regarded as so strategic requires further consideration. One factor mentioned was the greater plasticity and lower opportunity cost for learning during adolescence than at older ages. This point was emphasized by Arnold Freeman in his study of Birmingham:

The deterioration which has been too readily associated with the blind-alley occupation is, as a matter of fact, caused within a year or two of leaving school. And it would still be created, even if all industrial 'blind alleys' could be transformed into honest thoroughfares. The transition to manhood (coinciding with the termination of a blind-alley job) merely serves to reveal the deterioration. But this has been caused by social and industrial circumstances, which are independent of cul-de-sac employments. The impressionable period of adolescence, instead of being devoted to training as Nature intended, is sacrificed to the immediate profit of industry.¹⁹

But another issue of significance comes through in Freeman's survey of Birmingham. Freeman provides biographies and career profiles based on extensive interviews with several dozen Birmingham adolescents. What his portraits suggest is not that after a year of blind alley work there were insuperable barriers to the youth who wanted to shift to a line of work offering more training and future prospects. Rather his analysis indicates that habits and goals tended to be influenced by the initial type of

¹⁷Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.113.

¹⁸Spencer Gibb and J.H. Whitehouse, "Boy Labour: Towards Reform," in J.H. Whitehouse ed., *Problems of Boy Life*, p.89.

¹⁹Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, p.5.

employment and this in turn tended to set in motion whether further self-improvement would occur. In general, his vignettes portray a pattern of one step leading to another either in an upward or a downward direction.

Freeman says of one boy, he thinks is headed for a successful skilled career:

The boy seems to have kept a shrewd eye on the future during his whole industrial career. For two years after he left school, he went to evening classes for drawing, machine-designing, and general subjects. He said, perhaps with wisdom born after the event, that he was glad he had been in different jobs, because it had enabled him to learn different processes (pattern-making first, then modelling and designing in brass). He had observed that "if you stayed in one shop you learned only one thing." He thinks "you must move about, and then link it all together" if you want to be an all-round workman.²⁰

In contrast, Freeman points to another boy he thinks is headed in a less positive direction:

With a little more good fortune he would have been in skilled work. The father, however, is doing only casual work and lives alone with the son. C.T. started with errands, as so many do, and said to me apologetically, "I didn't think of anything when I'd just left school." Then for eighteen months he was going about on the wagons and motor lorry of a large firm. He left because he received no rise in wages and because the firm gave up its motor lorry, to which he had become attached! Then he thought he would try a biscuit factory, but found the heat of the ovens too much for him and left it in three weeks. And now he has descended to one of the meanest occupations a boy can have, bottle-washing for a brewery firm. He gets 10s. for this, besides tips when he goes round on Saturday with the wagons. He is keenly aware of the unsatisfactory nature of his present work, and is very anxious to be a motor-driver. On the motor lorry in his second job he almost learnt to drive, but he cannot get a licence till he is eighteen. It may be that later on he will be able to get into this superior employment, but every month that passes will make his prospects less hopeful.²¹

²⁰Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, p.16.

²¹Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, p.36.

Freeman summarizes the situation of a number of the boys he considers that could have pursued skilled situations, but in his judgment will not as follows:

One of them has had four jobs, all in the brass line; one (D.T.) has betrayed a love of horses throughout his career. None of the others seem to have had any aim or "consecutiveness" in their industrial careers. They change occupation as often as they change jobs.²²

The strategic role of acquiring skills during adolescence perceived by a number of commentators reflected the more general awareness that it was often not possible to continue in a given narrowly defined line of work beyond a given age, even though one was well short of retirement. This could be true of the blind alley occupations referred to here, but also for adults in such craft occupations as jewellers, tailors and hatters, as Booth and others have documented in some detail.²³ This feature of labor market experience would call for general skills which might make it feasible to switch from one line of work to another. On the one hand this would increase the value of such skills acquired during adolescence. On the other hand, insofar as some of the shifts involved uncertainty caused because of uncertain structural economic shifts, this may have caused uncertainty about which specific line of skilled work an adolescent should have pursued.²⁴

The missed opportunities for personal development were often seen as much as involving the development of poor habits and attitudes as of failure to develop specific skills. Bray stated that:

The boy gains nothing from this form of employment and loses much. He loses the results of his training in the elementary school; the habits of obedience, regularity, and industry are dead; the bright intelligence is dulled, and with the coming of dulness goes the power of learning. He

²²Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, pp.51-52.

²³See Charles Booth, *London Life and Labour*, ser. II Industry, Vol. V, Chap. V, "Age Distribution of the Occupied Classes."
John and Sylvia Jewkes, *The Juvenile Labour Market* (London, 1938), Chap. IV.

²⁴See Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.148.

loses his prospects; his future is the future of the unskilled labourer -- the unskilled labourer, robbed of that grit and alertness which alone secure for unskilled labour the adequate reward of permanent employment at a steady wage.²⁵

Bray says of shop and errand boys in particular:

Hours are long; at the same time, the boy is often idle for long period, waiting for messages to come in and parcels to go out. Shop-boys and telegraph-boys are kept hanging about with nothing to do. The office-boy in a small office is often the whole staff, and is left alone for hours when his master is out, and 'spends his time either in vacancy, in mischievous expeditions along the corridor, or in reading trash of a bloodthirsty nature...Either there is too much idleness or too much work; these are the alternatives.²⁶

Bray says of blind alley labor more generally:

The boy gains nothing from this form of employment and loses much. He loses the results of his training in the elementary school; the habits of obedience, regularity, and industry are dead; the bright intelligence is dulled, and with the coming of dulness goes the power of learning. He loses his prospects; his future is the future of the unskilled labourer - the unskilled labourer, robbed of that grit and alertness which alone secure for unskilled labour the adequate reward of permanent employment at a steady wage.²⁷

A number of commentators were struck by how frequently adolescents, especially those in blind alley occupations, changed employers. Concerns were raised about the general shiftlessness and lack of discipline this mobility would create and in particular to a lack of respect and obedience to any given employer, given that a new job would generally be readily available. Mention was particularly made of the frequent change in employer made by blind alley youth and the consequent shiftlessness that resulted. J.G. Cloete stated that:

²⁵Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.129.

²⁶Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.126.

²⁷Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, pp.129-30.

I have known boys, who within three years of leaving school, have been employed in as many as seventeen different situations, comprising some half-dozen totally different occupations...²⁸

Freeman found for a group of boys that he surveyed in Birmingham that during the three years between ages 14 and 17, they held an average of over five jobs each.²⁹ Freeman commented at some length about the adverse effects of frequent changing of jobs on character and work discipline:

The prevalent industrial conditions, offering to every lad an ample choice of employments, make control impossible. The boy knows that he is master of the situation, and, boy-like, he takes full advantage of his knowledge. He is encouraged to be careless and independent and irresponsible by the conditions which make a change of jobs so easy. And each change he makes is a further unloosening of the habits of obedience and discipline which the school has laboriously fostered in him. It is true that if he is to do unskilled work, it does not much matter whether he does two or three kinds of it, or only one kind. But what does matter very gravely is that he should acquire habits of self-control and self-respect, that the Change of Jobs inevitably serves to undermine. It is certainly the opinion of the employer that the boy who has had several jobs is less efficient; and such a boy's chances of adult employment are jeopardised by a nomadic juvenile career. The boy himself knows this well; and at the Exchange he makes every effort to conceal the number of his jobs. On the other hand, the boy who has been fortunate or sensible enough to stay in one place, has probably acquired habits of diligence and regularity, as well as "good character," which will be invaluable to him in seeking employment as an adult.³⁰

Concern was also raised about the effect of blind alley employment on health and physical development of adolescents. Some accounts argued that excessive physical strain was placed on adolescents in some blind alley occupations either because of the direct physical exertion involved or because of the long hours.

²⁸J.G. Cloete, "The Boy and His Work," in E.J. Urwick ed., *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities* (London: J.M. Dent, 1904), p.111.

²⁹Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, p.51.

³⁰Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, pp.194-95.

Freeman reiterated the long standing concerns of factory inspectors with the result of work conditions for stunting physical development:

we must realize that work which boys do is of a kind that rarely exercises the whole body; often it exercises merely a few of the smaller ancillary muscles. Yet it is during this period that Nature offers her greatest opportunity to the lad for physical development;...It seems probable that the great majority of the boys of this country are entering manhood physically undeveloped and unfit because of the impossibility of getting proper bodily exercise during this period.³¹

Ronald Ehrenberg has noted, in commenting on recent research on "dead-end" occupations in the late twentieth century United States, that a problem with studying the impact of tenure on such occupations on subsequent career performance, is disentangling the effect of tenure as such in these occupations from the initial characteristics of those who may have been selected into such occupations.³² Thus, it is of interest to note that accounts of blind alley labor from early twentieth century England claim that youths recruited into a number of these occupations -- van boys, newsboys, errand boys for example, were above average in intelligence and character. Messenger and newsboys, in particular, were noted for above average intelligence and initiative. And boys hired for the postal service and for telegraph services had to pass the seventh standard of elementary school and thus were regarded as above average in intelligence and character on entering.

Bray said of blind alley occupations:

These forms of occupation, though unskilled in the sense that the boy receives no training in his present place of business, nevertheless demand qualities of a high standard. The boy must be regular, obedient,

³¹Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, p.187. Also see Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.126.

³²See Ronald G. Ehrenberg, "Comment on Charles Brown, 'Dead-End Jobs and Youth Unemployment,'" in Freeman and Wise eds. *The Youth Labor Market Problem: Its Nature, Causes, and Consequences*. NBER Conference Report, (Chicago, 1982).

and, above all, intelligent. A dull boy as a messenger is liable to make stupid and irritating mistakes.³³

And Cyril Jackson said of telegraph boys in the service of the Post Office:

The boys come from very good homes, and are often the pick of the family. They are examined medically, and bring characters...It appears as if the Post Office is one of the least promising occupations into which a boy can enter. The better boys go into it, and it is very depressing to see from our returns how very few of the very large number discharged at sixteen or seventeen get into as good employment as their good social standing and general standard of education should have guaranteed for them.³⁴

A central contributing factor to the problem of blind alley employment was that on one hand adolescents were not viewed as having sufficient maturity and judgment to choose appropriate occupations with a view to their future consequences but on the other hand that parents, employers and societal institutions were not providing appropriate vocational guidance to youth either.

It does appear that choice of occupation and position to a large extent fell onto adolescents although with the establishment of various employment exchanges these also came to play a role.³⁵

At any rate the inability of adolescents to make prudent occupational choices with a view to their futures and the lack of appropriate guidance from parents, employers or others such as teachers was an oft repeated theme by social commentators.

³³Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.127.

³⁴Cited in Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.131.

³⁵For evidence on this point for around 1910 see Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*. For evidence for the 1920's and 1930's see Gt. Britain, Ministry of Labour, "Report on an Enquiry into the Personal Circumstances and Industrial History of 3,331 Boys and 2,701 Girls Registered for Employment at Employment Exchanges and Juvenile Employment Bureaux. June and July, 1925; and John and Sylvia Jewkes, *The Juvenile Labour Market* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938).

Cloete provided a useful overview of the various actors involved and the problematic role of each. He stated of the occupational choice for an adolescent boy:

To blame him for not exercising more care in his choice of work seems like blaming the heathen for being a heathen before he has had a chance of becoming anything else ... the boy's own ideas as to how he is to earn his living are usually, to say the least of it, hazy...A surprisingly small proportion will be found who look forward to following as a matter of course in their father's footsteps...a curious restlessness, consisting partly of ambition and partly of discontent, often induces the boy to strive after something which he considers more "respectable" than his father's calling... the indifference of the boy on the subject is widespread...Thus a boy, on leaving school, will often go out to look for work with no fixed idea in his head, and simply drift into the first opening he comes across without the slightest effort at discrimination.³⁶

Cloete did not put much confidence in the ability of parents to choose wisely:

The views of the parents as to the best opening for their children are usually somewhat distorted ones. With them the application of the old proverb of a bird in the hand being worth two in the bush amounts to a positive vice. It is the exception rather than the rule to meet with parents who are willing to put their sons to a good trade and accept the lower wages that anything in the nature of an apprenticeship would involve...³⁷

Cloete went on to suggest that because adolescents typically left home around age 18 or 19, that parents were particularly concerned with maximizing their earnings during before that age at the expense of opportunities for skill development and establishing links into more rewarding employment after adolescence:

the home life is rarely sufficiently attractive to keep the sons of the family at home much after the age of nineteen or twenty. It seems almost as if the instinctive knowledge of this fact influences the minds of the parents, and gives rise to a vague sort of feeling which they themselves would be the first to repudiate, that they are responsible for their children only until that age. In some cases, at any rate, the result of this is that the parents regard it as a matter of course that they should

³⁶J.G. Cloete, "The Boy and His Work," pp.106-110.

³⁷ibid., p.105.

make as much as possible out of their children while they are still at home, and shut their eyes to the years to come.³⁸

Nor did Cloete think that much reliable guidance would be provided either by teacher or employer:

For the teacher it can be fairly argued that the future welfare of his pupils is no concern of his, and that his responsibility ceases the moment the boy leaves school. Teachers are occasionally to be found, especially among the assistants, who are willing to turn to good account the knowledge they have gained of the character and special aptitudes of the boy, by suggesting to him the sort of work for which he is best suited, and, when possible, helping him to secure it. The value of such help can hardly be overestimated. It is greatly to be regretted that there is not more of it given, for the teacher whose opinion carries weight with the boys is one of the very few people whose advice the boy is likely to follow. To expect more from the employer seems hopeless. It is only natural that he should confine himself to the business point of view, and continue to draw large quantities of labour from the cheapest market without troubling himself as to the future of those who provide that labour.³⁹

Bray noted problems caused by the fact that father and son did not work together:

He has not his father by his side to note and guide his conduct; and if he enters a skilled trade, he lacks the personal interest of the parent to guarantee his satisfactory training. We have already seen that the school supervision is at an end; in consequence, the only disciplinary influence is the influence of the employer.⁴⁰

Bray went on to provide a general pessimistic assessment of the situation in London:

The boy should be underadequate supervision until he reaches the age of at least eighteen. In London, so far as the majority are concerned, all State supervision ends at fourteen. When the boy goes out to work what measure of supervision was previously found in the home comes to an end; it is beyond the power of parents to exert any real control over the boy. He is his own master, finds his employment for himself,

³⁸ibid., p.106.

³⁹ibid., p.104.

⁴⁰Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p.120.

and leaves it when he thinks fit. Philanthropic enterprise touches a fringe, and a fringe only, of the boys; their growing sense of independence resents restraint. The story of the workshop points the same moral. Personal relations between boy and employer are seldom possible; and where the demand for the services of boys is unlimited and unsatisfied, attempts to enforce discipline fail, because, sooner than submit, the boy seeks another situation.⁴¹

Freeman also decried the lack of guidance or supervision when he reviewed the cases of a group of boys who he thought had the potential to become skilled workers but were unlikely to do so:

it seems that with the help of a good friend or the interest of a good employer, every one of these boys might have entered into the higher grades of industry. They seem to have been fitted for skilled work, but to have failed to get to it, because they had no encouragement, or training. It is difficult nicely to apportion the blame for this waste of human material. The boy is at fault in the sense that he did not exhibit qualities above the average in coping with circumstances, but beyond that we can scarcely condemn any of these thirteen. It would seem that in every case -- certainly in all those considered in this investigation -- the boy is subject to a pressure of circumstances against which it is beyond the average boy's strength to make headway....only three of the fathers of these thirteen were [skilled workers]. There is almost a caste-system in the various grades of labour; and the fact that the father is unskilled seems to act like a bias carrying the son also towards unskilled labour. Heredity, the father's narrower circle of ideas and his lack of influence in the industrial world, seem to predetermine the career of his children....In most cases the conditions of work, combined with the absence of elevating influence, merely to render inefficient a lad who would in any case have been an unskilled worker. But in these thirteen cases circumstances seem to have depressed boys well fitted for first-rate manual work, and made of them unskilled workers. The boy may be partly to blame. What is certainly wrong is the system which leaves him during these impressionable years without guidance or supervision.⁴²

Freeman went on to note the short sighted objectives of most parents with regard to adolescent employment:

⁴¹ibid., pp.149-50.

⁴²Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour*, pp.34, 40-42.

The parents left to themselves will in most cases send the boy, or rather, let the boy take himself, into whatever job secures the largest immediate income. This is in the main because of their poverty and their apathy to the boy's interests.

I made the most careful inquiries on this point in every case, and I doubt if one-sixth of all the parents I questioned had helped their boy into a job or took any real interest in what he was doing. 'We never worried.' 'I never troubled about it; I thought they could all find their own.' Many parents even pique themselves on their boy's ability to shift for himself...Parental interest rarely rises even to the negative service of keeping the boy out of some job thought to be harmful. And even supposing the parents to be awake to the boy's life-interests, they find it quite impossible to know what to do. Premiums beyond their means bar the way to many skilled trades.⁴³

And Freeman a quite useful general statement of the problem facing the adolescent in choosing a position in the labor market:

The industrial world is so uncertain and so complex that even those best acquainted with industrial conditions would find it difficult to advise what to do with a boy. The lad himself often has no distinctive aptitude or inclinations at 14. He often prefers unskilled work. He is, moreover, resentful of parental discipline. And beneath all these difficulties is the fundamental one that the work open to boys and men is most of it unskilled work. Several rather better-class working-men have expressed their perplexity to me in different ways. "We didn't know what to put him to. We thought we'd let him tackle two or three jobs, and then see what suited him." "I tried to get him to learn a trade, but gave it up. Employers don't help you." In two or three cases the parents have struggled hard to get the boy into an educative job, but have found it impossible. The boy fails them; or the employer is unsatisfactory; or the apparent trade turns out to be a low-paid mechanical occupation. It is small wonder that the parents, as a rule, abandon all attempt to steer their lads, and merely content themselves with taking the earnings.⁴⁴

⁴³ibid., p.174.

⁴⁴ibid., pp.174-75.

Comparison of the Occupational Paths, Destinations, and Wages of youth in Blind Alley Occupations with all Youth

Evidence compiled from industrial biographies, asking youths to profile their work experience to date suggests the initially relatively high wages, but subsequently far slower wage growth and even lagging behind, of youths in occupations commonly regarded as blind alley. The prime example of this were vanboys. The survey compiled for the poor law commission in the early twentieth century indicates that at age 14, van boys in London earned on average 7 sh. 8 d. per week, a wage exceeded by only two other occupational groups. However, by age 19, van boys wages had increased to only 11sh. 6 d., whereas the next two lowest occupational groups had wages of 15 shillings per week at this age, with the remaining 5 occupational groupings reporting weekly wages ranging from 18.5 shillings to 23 sh. 5 d. for 19 year olds.

[See Table 1 and Chart 1]

Of course, for this comparison of full wage profiles between to be meaningful, one must assume that a youth who starts as a van boy at age 14, remains as a van boy until age 19. In fact the collection of industrial biographies indicates that this assumption is questionable. In Cyril Jackson's report for the Poor Law Commission, making use of these biographies, he provides an age profile of occupations for youths between the ages of 14 and 22 who were at some point in that interval a van boy. Because a number of youths were interviewed while still in their teens, the sample dwindles in size, especially from age 18 onwards; in general the boys interviewed were between age 18 and 23. Of the 156 youths in this sample, 75 percent were van boys at age 14, while by age 17, of the 137 youths reporting information only 34.8 percent were still van boys, while of the 100 youths still in the sample at age 19, only 4 percent were van boys.

[see Table 2 and Chart 2.]

Jackson's industrial biographies suggest that a similar experience typified another group of occupations commonly viewed as blind alley, errand and shop boys. Jackson reports the subsequent adolescent careers of 150 London boys who were all errand and shop boys at age 14. By age 16, only 43 percent were still shop boys; by age 18 only 26 percent; and by age 19 only 18 percent.

[see Table 3 and Chart 3].

Thus, boys who entered so-called blind alley occupations, hardly seem to have been stuck there throughout adolescence.

One aspect of the industrial biographies, that is occupational profiles by age, for adolescents that would seem to support the concerns just cited of thwarted skill development from even just a few years of employment in blind alley occupations is the difference in occupational distributions in late adolescence and early adulthood for youths who were at one point van boys or errand boys in comparison with all school leavers. For example, if occupation at age 19 is considered, of all school leavers in Jackson's sample who were employed, 16.3 percent were in skilled trades, 14.3 percent were clerks, and 34.1 percent were in low-skilled occupations, for a total of 64.7 percent with claim to occupations with at least modest degrees of promise. Only 8.7 percent were general and casual labourers. A further 8 percent were unemployed. In contrast, among 19 year olds who been a van boy for at least some part of their adolescence, only 4 percent were in skilled trades, 1 percent were clerks, and 29 percent were in low-skilled occupations, for a total of 34 percent in occupations with some degree of promise. 14 percent were general and casual labourers. And 29 percent were carmen. Among 19 year olds who had been errand and shop boys for at least some part of their adolescence, 10 percent were in skilled trades, 1.8 percent were clerks and 34.5 percent were in low-skilled occupations, for a total of 46.3 percent in occupations with at least some degree of promise. And 18 percent were general and casual labourers.

[See Table 4 and Chart 4 in comparison with Tables 2 and 3 and Charts 2 and 3].

Of course, these simple comparisons do not control for ability and characteristics adolescents brought to their labor market experiences, but as already noted these do not seem to completely account for differences. The comparisons do at any rate suggest that choice of initial occupation could have definite effects on outcomes at the end of adolescence.

The Significance of the Alleged Blind Alley Employment Problem

Early twentieth century commentators on the problem of blind alley employment generally argued that some sort of intervention by the state was required to address it. The implied premise behind their policy recommendations was that the unregulated labor market had been subject to failure in dealing with the issue of adolescent employment. On the hand the rise of distributive activity in major cities was seen as increasing the demand for adolescent labor. On the other hand, the decline of traditional apprenticeship, and the strong preference for present over future consumption on the part of adolescents and their parents alike was seen as leading to a situation where inadequate consideration was given to the influence of current adolescent employment on labor force skill formation.

One convenient statement of the first aspect of the issue was provided by the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws:

The problem owes its rise in the main to the enormous growth of cities as distributive centres--chiefly and most disastrously, London -- giving innumerable openings for errand-boys, milk-boys, office and shop-boys, bookstall-boys, van, lorry, and trace boys, street-callers, etc. In nearly all these occupations the training gained leads to nothing; and the occupations themselves are, in most case, destructive to healthy

development owing to long hours, long periods of standing, walking, or mere waiting, and morally are wholly demoralising.⁴⁵

Tawney analyzed the other aspect of the issue in his essay on "The Economics of Boy Labour," as follows:

a moment's reflection is sufficient to show that the relative eligibility of different occupations must be estimated with reference to very different considerations in the case of a boy and in the case of an adult man. In the case of the adult the crucial question for the individual is normally the obtaining of the best remuneration in the immediate present, for society the obtaining of the best service for the least real cost. In the case of the adolescent different standards have to be applied. On the one hand, the years between fourteen and twenty-one must not only pay for the maintenance of the boy during those years, but must prepare for maintaining him in independence in manhood; and if it were possible to imagine some monstrous economic boy weighing with due deliberation the alternatives open to him on emerging from the seventh standard, he would undoubtedly reflect that to consider only the immediate relative advantages of different trades in respect of hours and wages would be as improvident as it would be for a man who had heavy liabilities to meet ten years hence to lay aside nothing against them. On the other hand, the adolescent worker is, from the point of view of society, not only the supplier of present wants but the sole means of supplying future and possibly more urgent wants; not (like a man) a finished article, but the raw material for other articles. The community which would get the maximum economic satisfaction out of its human material has to take a dynamic and not a static view of adolescent labor. It has to ascertain the point where the future satisfaction to be derived from the development of "productive powers" and the present sacrifice involved in developing them instead of satisfying certain immediate wants balance each other...⁴⁶

A number of types of government actions were called for by reformers and at least some of these were enacted. The legal school leaving age was raised from 13 to 15 over the first half of the twentieth century. This measure was viewed as important not

⁴⁵cited in Spencer J. Gibb, "Recent Parliamentary and Other Inquiries concerned with Problems of Boy Life," in J.H. Whitehouse ed. *Problems of Boy Life* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1912).

⁴⁶Tawney, "Economics of Boy Labour," pp.49-50.

only to provide additional training through formal schooling but also to prevent youths from being subject to the adverse influences of labor market experience at what were perceived as the especially vulnerable ages of 13 and 14.⁴⁷ In conjunction with labor exchanges established from 1909 onwards to deal with unemployment at all ages, reformers proposed that such exchanges make special provision for juvenile workers. In particular they proposed providing vocational counselling and monitoring the experiences of juvenile workers in order to improve their chances of pursuing a satisfactory track towards adult employment.⁴⁸ Reformers also proposed various vocational training schemes for adolescents up until at least the age of 18. Some schemes involved half-time training and half-time employment. Others involved full-time training before adolescents could seek employment. The survey of English social conditions in the mid-1950's by Carr-Saunders, Jones, and Moser indicates reasonably active use of the Youth Employment Service (one of the major institutions established to provide vocational counselling through labor exchanges), a diminished concern with blind alley employment, and confidence in the revival of the apprenticeship system.⁴⁹ It is possible that by the mid-twentieth century technological change in communications, transport, and retail sectors had lowered the demand of these sectors for adolescent labor, although at least some of this change could have been in response to pressures to reduce the use of adolescent labor. However, despite whatever influence these changes might have had, Carr-Saunders, Jones, and Moser still report that in 1955, 58.1 percent of occupied 15-year old English males were in "other employment" compared with 36.5 percent in apprenticeship or learnership to skilled

⁴⁷See Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, chap. VI; Jewkes and Jewkes, *Juvenile Labour Market*, Chap. IV; London Trades Council, *Juvenile Employment and Blind Alley Labour: The Problem and Its Remedies* (London, 1945).

⁴⁸See Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, chap. VI; Jewkes and Jewkes, *Juvenile Labour Market*, chap. IV; and Arthur Greenwood, *Juvenile Labour Exchanges and After-Care* (London: P.S. King, 1911).

⁴⁹A.M. Carr-Saunders, D. Caradog Jones, and C.A. Moser, *A Survey of Social Conditions in England and Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp.75-79.

crafts.⁵⁰ The question of what provision if any should be made for training and vocational guidance for adolescents neither going on for further education nor in apprenticeship programs continues to be problematic in England to the present day.⁵¹

Arguments can be offered in defense of the performance of an unregulated market for adolescent labor. One must recognize that the seemingly trifling issue of whether a fourteen year-old boy should take a job as a van-boy rather than a job as a plumber's assistant, a position with perhaps greater longer-term vocational value, was in fact subject to diverse and conflicting considerations. The most obvious consideration would be perhaps balancing the preference for immediate income, especially in family circumstances of poverty against the value of enhanced future earning power. Uncertainty about the ability and character of the boy and their potential for further development should be taken into account, uncertainty almost sure to be greater at adolescence than at older ages. Uncertainty about future labor market conditions for various potential occupations for the adolescent should also be given consideration. Although the unregulated labor market may have taken account of these considerations in an imperfect manner, it would have offered signals in the form of wage differences across various adolescent occupations reflecting current and expected future demands for various skills and occupations. The question can be posed of whether state supervision was able to perform better than an unregulated market in taking account of these various considerations.

⁵⁰ibid., p. 78.

⁵¹See for example, Michael Sanderson, "The Missing Stratum -- The Problem of Secondary Technical Education in England, 1900-1960s," in Gabriel Tortella ed. *Education and Economic Development Since the Industrial Revolution* (Valencia, Spain: Generalitat Valencia, 1990); and William E. Northdurft, *Schhol Works: Reinventing Public Schools to Create the Workforce of the Future. Innovations in Education and Job Training from Sweden, West Germany, Great Britain, France, and Philadelphia* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1989).

However, these issues are raised here not in order to justify an evaluation of the case for or against state supervision of adolescent labor markets but because they suggest how strategic yet problematic the working of adolescent labor markets could be. The basic problem posed by the alleged existence of blind alley employment is what relation should exist between employment at an early stage in the labor force and that at later stages. There is in all of the material considered above a sense that career progression was important and that work at younger ages should connect in some way with work at older ages. Whether an unregulated market could provide for satisfactory progression from adolescent employment to employment more suitable for adult workers or whether social reformers in the early twentieth century overstated the influence of teenage work experience on adult work experience requires further examination. But no matter who made the decisions about adolescent work experience they were not easy ones, involving as they did tradeoffs between future payoffs and the frequent immediate press of poverty and in the context of considerable uncertainty about both the real abilities and potential of the adolescent involved and about the future labor market conditions for what ever occupation he might choose to pursue. The role of the adolescent, his parents, and further guidance from state, school, former teachers, and employers all involved a delicate balance. Balancing the various considerations involved continues to be complex, which provides all the more reason for continued scrutiny of how these difficult issues have been handled in past times.

From: REPORT ON BOY LABOUR BY MR. CYRIL JACKSON.

TABLE 1

Compiled by Mr. HENRY D. HARDEN.

CHART showing average wage of different kinds of occupations at all ages from 14 to 22. Where less than ten cases available, they are not included.

NOTES.—* Over 10 and less than 20 cases.
† Over 100 and less than 200 cases.
‡ Over 200 and less than 300 cases.
§ Over 300 and less than 400 cases.

	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
A. . .	6 8½‡	8 0	10 5	13 9	16 11	23 5	28 8	32 6	31 7½
B. . .	5 8	6 5½	8 0	10 5	12 4½	15 0½*	—	—	—
Ca. . .	7 5½	9 2½	13 0	14 7	17 10	18 7½	21 5½	25 5½	26 3 *
Cb. . .	7 0½	8 10 ‡	12 3 ‡	13 7½‡	15 10½‡	18 5½	18 11 †	20 11½	22 4½
Cc. . .	9 0 *	11 10½*	15 1	17 0½	18 2½	19 0½	21 7	23 4½	23 8½
Cd. . .	8 0½	10 1½	13 2½	14 8	17 7	19 8	23 0	22 0	22 8
Da. . .	6 11½	8 2½*	11 0½*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Db. . .	6 1	8 5 ‡	10 0 †	11 7 †	13 8½	15 0	17 3	17 5	22 10
Dc. . .	7 8	8 1½	9 10	10 1½	11 10½	11 6 *	—	—	—

N.B.—In preparing this Chart only those cases are included for which the wage at the given age has been actually ascertained. It often happens that the particulars are given in some such form as this:—Errand boy for four years after leaving school, 6s. rising to 11s. In such cases the wage at 14 is put down at 6s., and the wage at 17 at 11s., the intermediate years being omitted from the calculation.

KEY TO THE LETTERS.

- A Skilled trades, except apprentices.
- B Apprentices.
- Ca Clerks and office boys.
- Cb Low skilled and unskilled trades (everything not included in other categories)
- Cc Carmen, and with horses.
- Cd Labourers and casual labourers (including hawkers).
- *Da Post-office.
- Db Errand boys and shop boys
- Dc Vanboys.

* Note.—The distinction between C and D is that the latter consists of boys' occupations which lead nowhere, except in the case of Db., which includes a few shop assistants of a more advanced age. C contains the occupations in which men are employed though including many operations in the factories that are confined to boys.

TABLE 2

LONDON.

VAN BOYS.—

(Selected from *all* kinds of Forms, *i.e.*, from Schools, Distress Committees, &c.).

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF BOYS IN VARIOUS TRADES.

Age	14.		15.		16.		17.		18.		19.		20.		21.		22.	
	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.
Skilled Trades	2	1.2	4	2.6	3	2.3	7	5.1	7	5.6	4	4.0	3	3.9	1	1.8	1	4.0
Clerks	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.8	1	1.0	2	2.6	1	1.8	—	—
Low Skilled	14	8.9	23	18.1	36	24.4	38	27.7	20	23.2	29	29.0	17	22.0	14	26.4	6	24.0
Carmen-	5	3.2	5	3.2	18	12.2	28	20.5	30	24.0	29	29.0	23	30.0	15	28.4	9	32.0
Casual and General Labourers	1	.6	5	3.2	10	6.8	8	5.8	16	12.3	14	14.0	14	18.2	14	26.4	7	28.0
Errand and Shop Boys	17	10.9	16	10.4	12	8.1	10	7.3	11	8.8	8	8.0	4	5.2	2	3.7	—	—
Van Boys	117	75.0	96	62.3	69	46.5	45	34.8	20	16.0	4	4.0	2	2.6	1	1.8	1	4.0*
Army	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.7	11	8.8	10	10.0	10	13.0	3	5.6	—	—
Emigrants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.0	2	2.6	2	3.7	1	4.0
Total	156	—	154	—	148	—	137	—	125	—	100	—	77	—	53	—	25	—

* N.B.—Only 1 boy in each case.

Each of these tables correspond to the chart. From Table 12 we see that Van Boys are recruited from and go into only low-skilled work.

Some variation in the numbers accounted for at each age is inevitable, as the forms do not always account for every year clearly enough to make it possible to extract the particulars with certainty. (See next page.)

NOTE.—References made in this volume and in the Reports of the Commission to the pages in this volume are to the page-numbering in brackets.

From: REPORT ON BOY LABOUR BY MR. CYRIL JACKSON

TABLE 3

LONDON.

ERRAND AND SHOP BOYS.—(See Chart B.)

(Selected from forms of all kinds)

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF BOYS IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS AT SEVERAL AGES.

Ages	14		15		16		17		18		19		20		21		22	
	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.
Skilled Trades	—	—	7	4.7	12	8.0	10	6.8	12	9.4	11	10.0	13	14.4	8	13.0	7	17.7
Clerks	—	—	3	2.0	6	3.3	2	1.3	2	1.5	2	1.8	1	1.1	1	1.7	1	2.4
Low-skilled	—	—	20	13.4	33	22.0	43	29.6	42	33.0	38	34.5	28	31.2	19	32.2	10	24.4
Carmen	—	—	1	.6	2	1.3	2	1.3	4	3.1	8	7.3	4	4.4	2	3.4	2	4.9
Van Boys	—	—	11	7.3	16	10.6	16	10.3	1	.7	1	.9	—	—	—	—	—	—
General and Casual Labourers	—	—	0	4.0	15	10.0	16	11.4	20	17.3	20	18.0	21	23.3	17	29.0	15	36.5
Errand and Shop Boys	150	100	102	68.0	64	42.7	50	34.5	23	20.0	20	18.0	16	16.6	6	10.2	4	9.8
Army	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1.4	7	5.5	6	5.4	5	5.5	2	3.4	—	—
At Sea	—	—	—	—	3	2.0	6	3.4	3	2.3	4	3.6	2	2.2	1	1.7	—	—
Emigrants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.7	—	—	1	1.1	3	5.1	2	4.9
Total	150	—	150	—	150	—	146	—	127	—	110	—	90	—	59	—	41	—

As these charts and tables are compiled from the biographies of boys between 18 and 23, the numbers dealt with at each age will diminish rapidly after 18, e.g., in above table 41 of the boys have reached 22 years of age out of the total number of 150. The remainder, when filling up the form, had only reached 21, 20, 19 or 18 years of age as the case may be.

TABLE 4

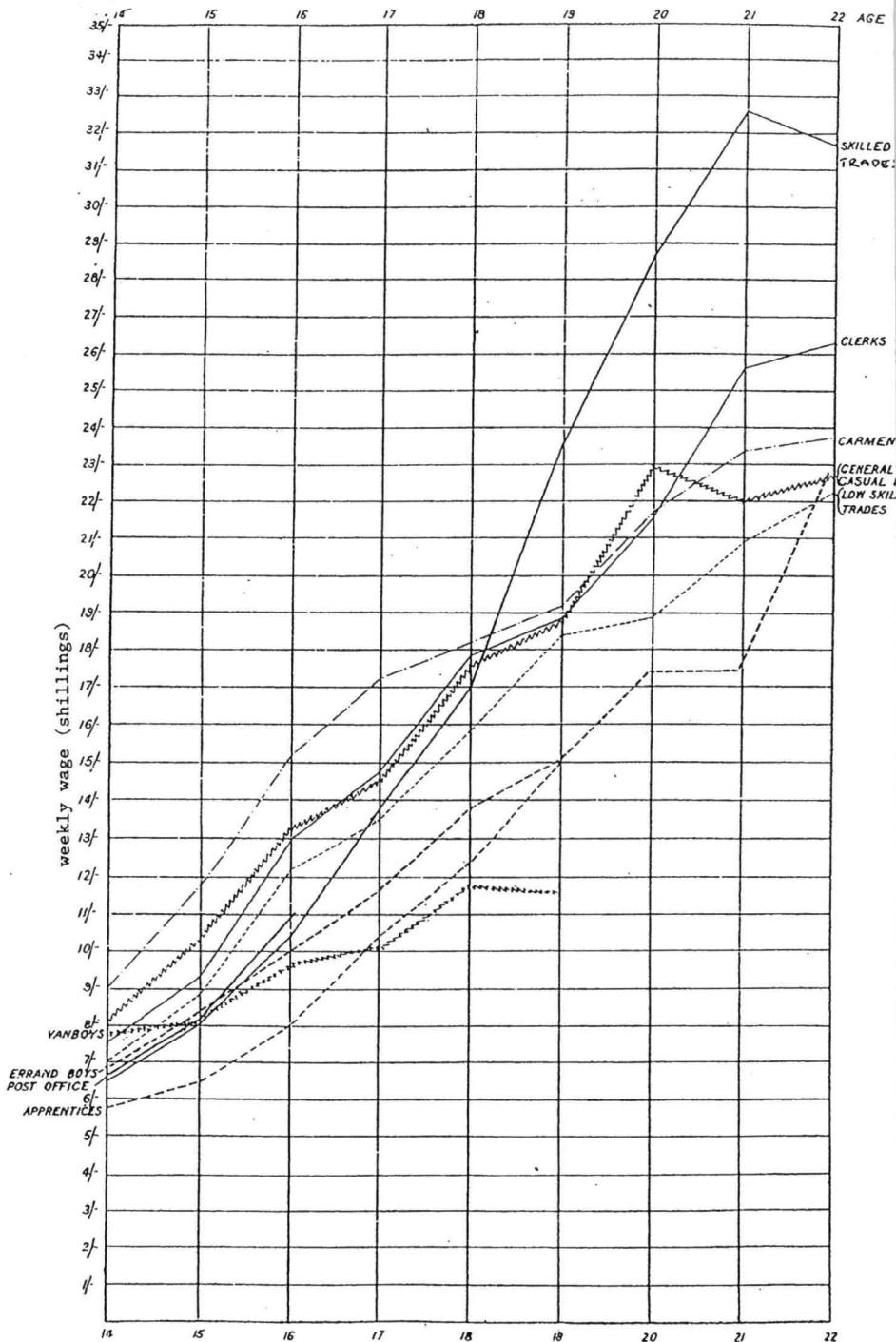
RETURNS FROM SOME LONDON SCHOOLS.

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF BOYS IN VARIOUS GROUPS OF OCCUPATIONS AT EACH AGE.

Ages -	14		15		16		17		18		19		20		21		22	
	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.	Number.	Percent- age.
Skilled Trades	54	11.2	70	14.0	79	16.8	80	17.8	64	18.0	41	16.3	26	16.6	11	13.0	3	9.4
Clerks	71	14.6	75	15.0	75	16.4	68	15.2	55	15.4	36	14.3	24	15.3	15	17.6	6	18.0
Low-skilled	137	28.2	164	32.8	162	34.1	152	33.0	116	32.5	86	34.1	56	35.7	22	26.0	14	43.0
Carmen	3	.6	1	.2	3	.6	12	2.6	16	4.5	13	5.1	7	4.4	3	3.5	-	-
Van Boys	40	8.2	33	6.6	25	5.2	22	4.9	10	2.8	3	1.2	1	.6	-	-	-	-
Post Office	7	1.4	7	1.4	1	.2	1	.2	1	.3	3	1.2	1	.6	1	1.1	1	3.1
Errand and Shop Boys	148	30.5	110	22.0	87	18.4	67	15.0	45	12.6	26	10.3	14	8.8	5	5.9	1	3.1
General and Casual Labourers	26	5.3	35	7.0	32	6.7	31	6.9	23	6.4	22	8.7	16	10.2	13	15.3	5	15.6
Army	-	-	3	.6	3	.6	5	1.1	13	3.6	10	4.0	5	3.2	8	9.4	-	-
At Sea	1	.2	2	.4	4	.8	7	1.5	10	2.8	9	3.5	5	3.2	4	4.7	-	-
Emigrants	-	-	0	.0	1	.2	2	.4	3	.8	3	1.2	2	1.3	3	3.5	2	6.2
Total -	1485	-	500	-	474	-	448	-	356	-	252	-	157	-	85	-	32	-
Unemployed -	1	-	2	-	4	-	13	-	22	-	22	-	22	-	10	-	7	-

These biographies have been obtained from Social or Old Boys' Clubs, Schoolmasters, Managers of Schools, &c. Some are from rather better class schools, but the most complete returns are from two East End schools, Northey Street and Gill Street County Council Schools, Limehouse. In the former school, with one or two exceptions, the biographies of all the boys who left between 1900 and 1904 were obtained. It is probable that if a larger number of the biographies had come from better-to-do districts there would have been a much greater difference between Tables 14 and 15. It is noticeable that some boys stayed at school till 15 in West and North London schools.

Chart 1
Weekly Wages of various occupations at ages 14-22 (in shillings)



From: Cyril Jackson, Report on Boy Labour

CHART 2

VAN BOYS (LONDON)

(SOME BOYS BECOME VANBOYS AT 15 & 16 AFTER STARTING IN SOME OTHER OCCUPATION ON LEAVING SCHOOL. ALL THE BOYS IN THIS CHART HAVE AT SOME TIME IN THEIR LIVES BEEN VAN BOYS.)

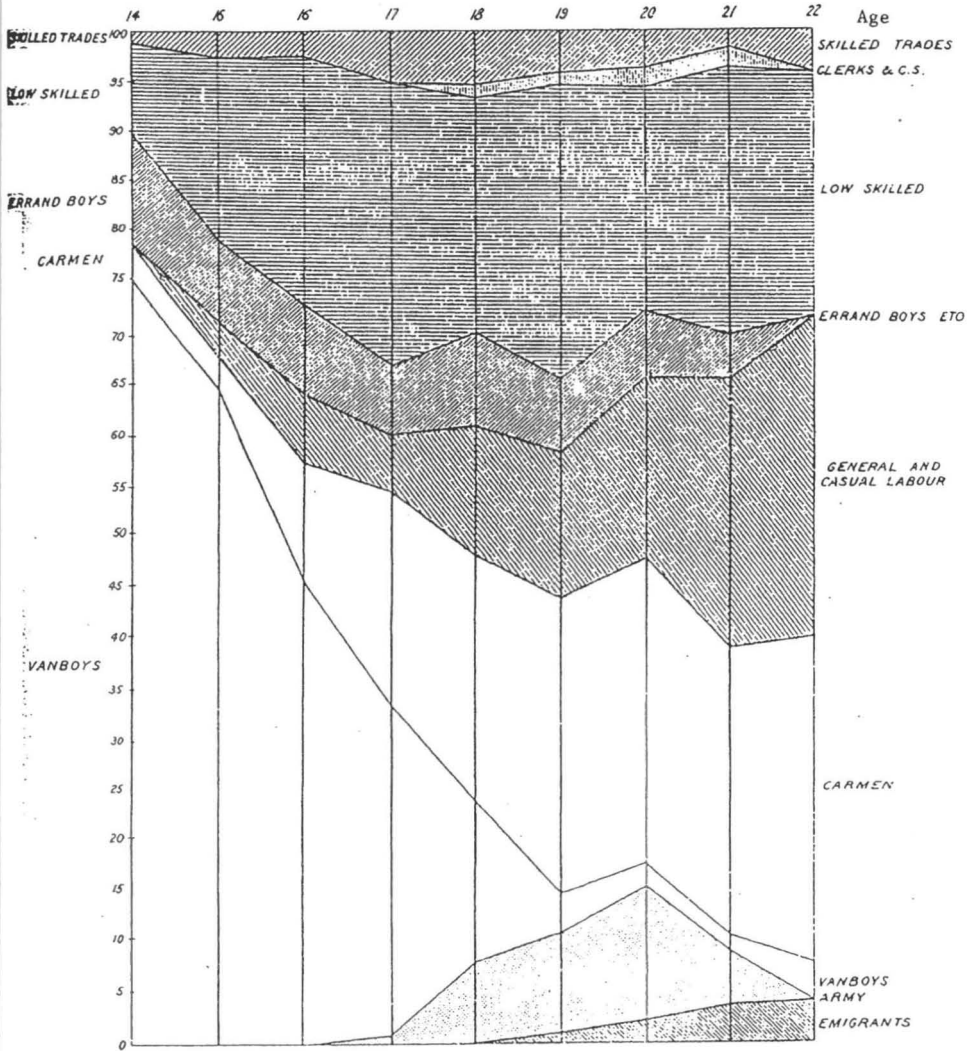
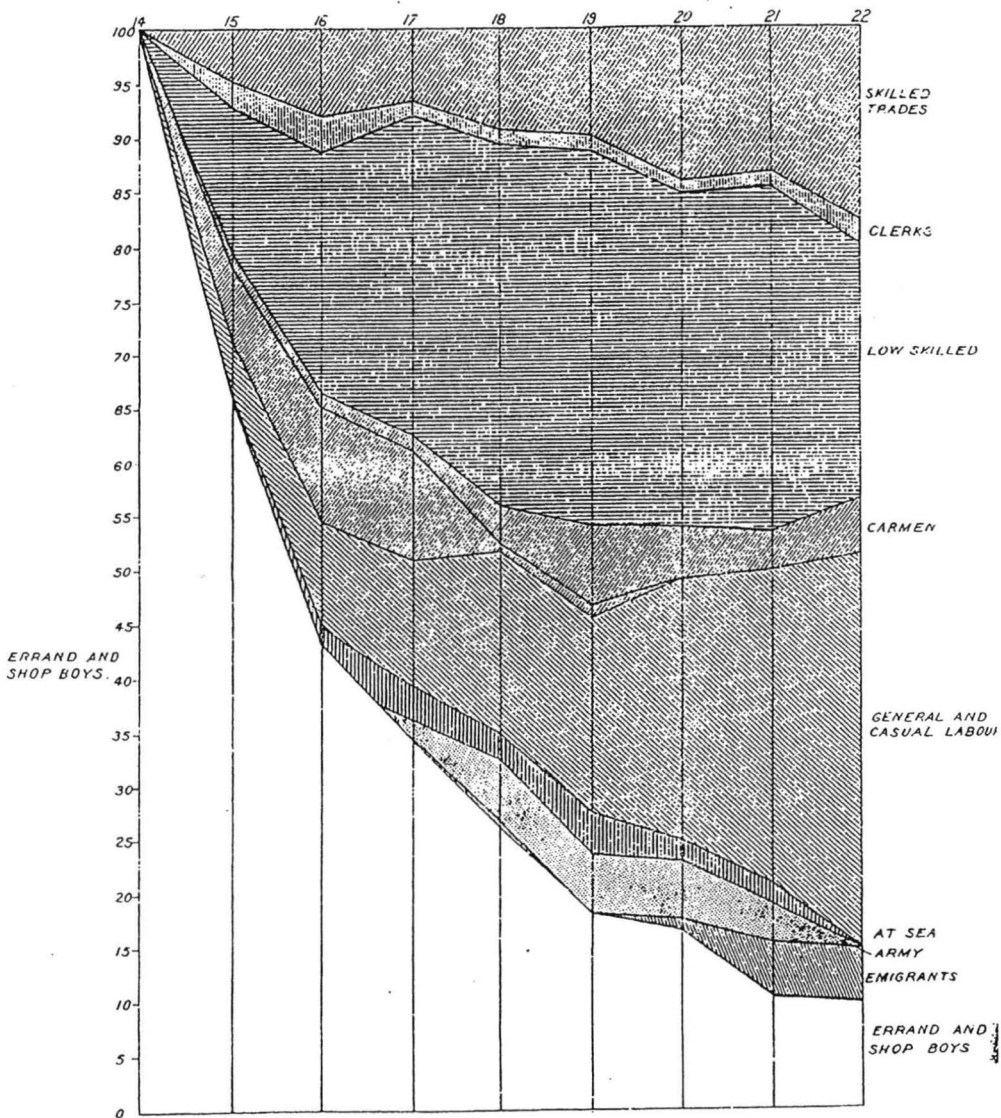


Chart 3

(150 CASES).

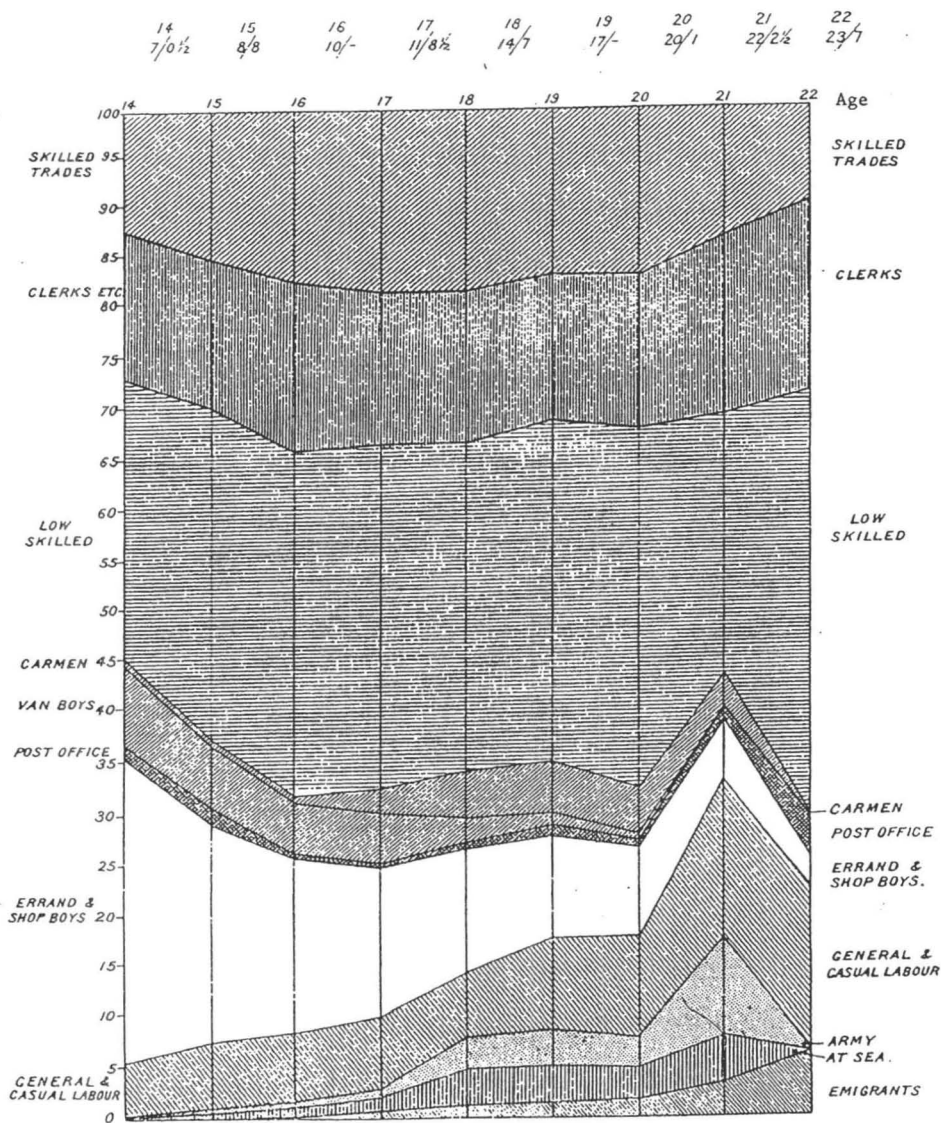
London Errand and Shop Boys Careers

AFTER 20 THE NUMBERS ARE SO FEW AS TO MAKE THE
RESULT UNCERTAIN. THE BOYS REMAINING AS ERRAND
& SHOP BOYS SHOULD BE RECKONED AS SHOP ASSISTANTS.



LONDON SCHOOL CASES ETC.(OTHER THAN FROM DISTRESS COMMITTEE)

Chart 4



LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

ECONOMIC HISTORY DEPARTMENT WORKING PAPERS

1992

1. Competing Notions of "Competition" in Late-Nineteenth Century American Economics
Mary S. Morgan
2. New Light Through Old Windows: A New Perspective on the British Economy in the Second World War
Peter Howlett
3. Social Risk and Social Welfare in Britain, 1870-1939
Paul Johnson
4. Textile Factories, Tuberculosis and the Quality of Life in Industrializing Japan
Janet Hunter
5. European Emigration 1815-1930. Looking at the Emigration Decision Again
Dudley Baines
6. Scale Bias & State Building: an Historical Perspective on Government Intervention, Political Systems & Economic Performance in Tropical Africa
Gareth Austin
7. Class Law in Victorian England
Paul Johnson
8. The Instituto Nacional de Prevision Social and Social Insurance Reform in Argentina, 1944 to 1953
Peter Lloyd-Sherlock
9. Human Capital and Payment Systems in Britain, 1833-1914
Dudley Baines, Peter Howlett, Paul Johnson
10. Much Ado About Little
Robert Humphreys
11. Regional Fairs, Institutional Innovation and Economic Growth in Late Medieval Europe
S.R. Epstein

1993

12. The Performance of Public Enterprises in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe during the last two decades
David Ferreira
13. Political Primacy in Economic Laws: A Comparison of British and American Anti-dumping Legislation, 1921
Peter M. Richards
14. Scientific Charity in Victorian London. Claims and Achievements of the Charity Organisation Society, 1869-1890
Robert Humphreys
15. Essex Men Vindicated: Output, Incomes and Investment in Agriculture, 1850-73
E.H. Hunt and S.J. Pam
16. Learning by Doing among Victorian Farmworkers: A case study in the Biological and Cognitive Foundations of Skill Acquisition
David Mitch
17. "Blind Alley" Employment and the Role of Adolescent Labor Force Experience in Skill Development in Late 19th and Early 20th Century England
David Mitch
18. British Imperialism in Microcosm: The Annexation of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands
Margaret Ackrill

