

Civil Service has been drawn up by the Ministry of Labour, and is even now being considered by an Inter-Departmental Committee. The recommendations advocated in that report are based on the fundamental hypothesis that both parties to an industry—the employer and the employed—are well organised. If, therefore, men of science desire to have a voice in framing the conditions under which they work for the State, they must organise themselves, and the sooner the better. A beginning has been made, but only a beginning.

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2 Old Queen Street, S.W.1, November 5.

Modern Studies in Schools.

I WAS somewhat surprised to read in NATURE of October 3 a vigorous attack upon the Government Committee on Modern Languages on the ground of its having considered nothing but the interests of trade and diplomacy. I trust this will not deter your readers from examining what is generally considered to be a most valuable report. It is certainly a document which has met with the general approval of modern language teachers and others interested in the subject with which it deals. Against the charge made I may point out that of the nine pages of the section entitled "The Value of Modern Studies," nearly three are devoted to the higher aspects of the subject, while the section on the aims of language teaching in schools begins with the sentence, "Language teaching has, and should have, a disciplinary and educative aim," and the treatment of the subject is based on this text.

Most surprising of all is the view expressed in the article that "the opinions of the Committee on educational methods are astonishingly reactionary." If by "educational methods" is meant—as one supposes must be meant, considering the context—"methods of language teaching," the statement is the exact reverse of the truth. The opinions enunciated are the most advanced which have ever appeared in a document issued by a public authority. The Committee recognises the strong position now held by the "direct method," and discusses its merits critically, yet sympathetically. A whole section is devoted to phonetics, and the need for a good phonetic training for teachers is insisted on. Uniformity in grammatical terminology is recommended. Of our own suggestions for examinations, which are usually considered to be of a moderately advanced character, the report says that they are "good so far as they go, but they do not go far enough." An oral test is recommended in all cases, and free composition, it is considered, should either be substituted for or be additional to translation into the foreign tongue. Finally, it is urged that translation in school "should be practised only so far as it is necessary"—a view which probably many teachers will think unsound, but which none will characterise as reactionary.

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I CORDIALLY agree that teaching for "bread-winning" is the first duty, but "bread-winning" may be "bread-capturing," and it is this spirit, I am afraid, which pervades the report. But manufacturers to-day are more concerned with production and co-operation than with commerce, and they find the need for a wider knowledge of languages for this service, so I am not surprised that the *questionnaire* met with little response.

The aims and methods set forth in the report are

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of the standard classical type, and they insist on the study of one or, at most, of two languages taught to a high state of proficiency; but the needs of the times, and the average capacities of boys, demand a less specialised course. The difference is fundamental, as Mr. Bridge will admit. We expected a new method and a new outlook, but we got the old. In our opinion, schools should give boys the opportunity of reading many languages, not excluding the Eastern languages or the languages of Africa, and boys should use the languages for research and discovery. Whether this work is disciplinary or educative is of minor importance; or whether it cultivates taste or judgment. Of minor importance, too, as we think, are the various methods of teaching which are recounted by Mr. Bridge. It is true that these are the things which trouble the minds of many schoolmasters, but with deeper aims the methods would take care of themselves. We expected the Committee would have shown the way to more fundamental changes in method, but it did not do so.

THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLE.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH BILL AND AFTER.

SINCE October 17, when most of the newspapers gave prominence to an announcement that the Ministry of Health Bill had been re-cast and submitted to the War Cabinet, possibly because the body named has had other things to think of, nothing has been heard of this measure. Much, however, has been said and written of the Ministry itself, and a certain amount, none of it good, of the Local Government Board, the reason being the extent and severity of the influenza outbreak. If some of the speakers and writers are to be believed, the Board, because its methods are "wooden," or because of its "Poor Law taint," is mainly to blame for the epidemic: if there had been a Ministry in existence, the suggestion is that there most certainly would have been no outbreak.

The persons who make these statements are, many of them, those who are responsible for trying to convince the public that if only a Ministry of Health were formed there would follow an immediate and marked improvement in public health.

That many have listened to promises of this kind and look for something in the nature of a quick change is pathetically true. Unfortunately it is true also that disappointment awaits them. It has never been quite clear why it should have been necessary to exaggerate so much as to the benefits likely to follow the establishment of a Health Ministry. The case for a separate Ministry to co-ordinate health effort and ensure that all branches of hygiene, scientific, practical, and administrative, should have proper recognition and support was always sound, and no good can come of these exaggerations. On the contrary, a great deal of harm may result unless it is recognised at once and generally that it may be long, very long, before signs of improvement become apparent.

It has taken, and may still take, a long time to get a Ministry of Health Bill. It will take time