

The following are the union claims laid before the Conciliation Board on the 23rd August last:—

(1.) Increase of 10s. per month in wages of lamp-trimmers, able seamen, ordinary seamen, boys, or other employes (excepting officers) engaged on deck in all steamers or tenders owned or chartered by [owners previously mentioned]. (2.) Payment of overtime at the rate of 1s. per hour for all work done at cargo between the hours of 5 p.m. and 7 a.m. Overtime at the rate of 1s. per hour for firemen who work over eight hours per day in port, sea-watches to count as portion of eight hours. The crews of vessels leaving port on Sundays or stated holidays to be paid not less than 4s. per man. Schedule rates to be paid for all classes of work done in port on same days, or for being kept on board the vessel under any pretext whatever. When excursions are run on Sundays or stated holidays the whole crew to be paid overtime, such payments not to exceed 8s. and not less than 4s. per man. The foregoing to apply to all vessels, irrespective of whether engaged inside or outside river limits. (3.) Increase of £1 10s. per month in all firemen's, greasers', donkey-men's, or other employes' wages engaged in engine-room or stokehole who work six-hour watches. (4.) Keeping watch on vessels safely moored alongside any wharf on Sundays or stated holidays to be paid for at schedule rates. The same to apply to any night-watch, or portion of night-watch, kept at any other time. (5.) The absolute discontinuance of giving time off in lieu of overtime payments. No deductions to be made from overtime when once earned. (6.) The observance of five statutory holidays during the year—viz., Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Queen's Birthday, Good Friday, Eight Hours Demonstration Day or Labour Day. Overtime to be paid for these days as per clause 2.

The following are the concessions offered on the 28th July, 1897, by Mr. Ranson, of the Northern Steamship Company, providing other owners sailing from Auckland were brought in, and again offered on the 23rd August, 1897, before the Conciliation Board:—

(1.) Will agree to 10s. advance to all sailors. (2.) Will agree to 1s. per hour overtime, as at present, to A.B.s and firemen, and 9d. per hour to ordinary seamen, for all cargo-work done between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m., but to have the option of giving time off while in the Port of Auckland. Cannot consent to allow any overtime for vessels trading within extended river limits—viz., between Capes Colville and Bream Head. Thames, Coromandel, and Paeroa are tidal ports and smooth-water runs. (3.) Cannot consent to an increase of £1 10s. per month to firemen and greasers who work six-hour watches, as the company's steamers are all small and have short runs, but would increase their salary 10s. per month. (4.) Willing to abolish keeping watches alongside Auckland Wharf on Sundays, but would require not less than one-half of the crew to remain on board the vessel. The selection when necessary to be made by the officer in charge. (5.) Willing to abolish keeping watch after 5 p.m. when lying alongside Auckland Wharf, but would require one-half of the crew to remain on board the vessel. The selection when necessary to be made by the officer in charge. (6.) Cannot consent to the discontinuance of giving time off in lieu of overtime. (7.) Will observe the five statutory holidays through the year—viz., New Year's Day, Queen's Birthday, Good Friday, Eight Hours Demonstration or Labour Day, and Christmas Day. Overtime to be paid for all work done on these days at 1s. per hour, or, if working for the whole day, 8s. for the day. (8.) The company shall have the same right of employing non-members of the union as at present, but shall afford to members of the union the same right of employment as to others, and the fact of a man who has applied to the said company being a member of the said union shall not operate to prevent his obtaining such employment. (9.) The company shall have the same right as at present to engage hands by agents. (10.) The Seamen's Union representative is not to visit members on board ship.

Christchurch.

Engineering Dispute (before the Board of Conciliation).—The statement of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was given in November last, and the case was adjourned. Messrs. Taylor and Oakley (plumbers, &c.) were exempted from the dispute, as they did not employ any engineers. The engineering firms included in the dispute were Messrs. Anderson and Sons, Scott Brothers, Allison and Smail, Topliss Brothers, Johnston and Sons, H. Hepburn and Sons, Morton and Aschman, J. and T. Danks, and T. Troup.

Agricultural-implement makers were afterwards included in the dispute.

The freezing companies refused to take part in the dispute, and their portion of the case will have to go to the Arbitration Court.

Mr. Fraser appeared on behalf of the union.

Mr. Scott (for Messrs. Scott Brothers) said, so far as he could see, the action brought by the society was not because there was any dispute, but because, as other unions had got 1s. per day rise, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers did not see why they should not get it. He pointed out that in the matter of wages Christchurch compared favourably with other parts of New Zealand. There were twenty-nine boys and thirty-nine adults in Auckland, and the average rate of wages for adults was two guineas per week. In Auckland there are thirty-seven apprentices in the blacksmithing trade against fifty-two adults, the average wage £2 3s. 3d. per week; pattern-makers, one apprentice and four adults, receiving the average wage of £2 12s. 4d. per week. In Wellington there are twenty-nine apprentice engineering blacksmiths and forty-one adults, receiving the average wage of £2 9s. 2d. per week. He pointed out that in the returns, where the engineering is lumped together, under the heading of foundry-hands, it meant those who were working at engineering in foundries. At jobbing mechanical engineering in Wellington, there is one apprentice and ten adults, receiving the average wage of £2 7s. 6d. In the engineering trade in Christchurch: Turners, there are three apprentices and seven adults, the average rate of wages £2 8s. 3d.; machinists, there are fourteen apprentices and eleven adults, the average rate of wages £2 4s. 8d.; pattern-makers, seven apprentices and eight adults, average rate £2 12s. 7d.; fitters, thirty-one apprentices and twenty-three adults, the average rate £2 13s. 10d.; blacksmiths, thirteen apprentices and six adults, average rate £2 8s. 8d. In the Dunedin returns they are all lumped together under the heading of engineering, ninety-one apprentices and 176 adults, the average rate £2 8s. 10d. In reference to the railway workshops, at Addington the fitters receive 8s. 11d. per day; at Hillside the fitters receive 9s. 3d. At the present rate of wages Mr. Scott said that they could not compete successfully with imported manufactures. He could not point to a single individual in New Zealand who had made money out of manufacturing in the engineering trade. If the rate of wages were increased they would have to import very much more in proportion than they had done. He pointed out that the average rate of wages for the four large centres of the colony was about £2 8s. per week, including the railway workshops. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers asks for the minimum rate of 10s. per day. They ask not an increase of 1s. per day, but an increase of over 50 per cent. Mr. Scott said the figures he had stated had