

MEMORANDUM from Mr. JUSTICE CHAPMAN to the CHAIRMAN of the LABOUR BILLS COMMITTEE.

Judges' Chambers, Wellington, 5th October, 1904.

THE present state of the lists in the Arbitration Court hardly gives a fair test of the way in which it is able to deal with its business. There has been an abnormal accumulation of enforcement cases, due to the fact that Inspectors in undertaking this class of business have been obliged to deal with it systematically. This we are satisfied will bring about more regular observance of awards in future. The large number of prosecutions is analagous to what happened in the case of the Shop Hours Act, prosecutions under which have now become rare. In this class alone the Court had to deal with ninety cases in Wellington City and country last year, while this year it finds itself faced with 180 cases.

Compensation cases do not form a large part of the Court's business. Though a great many are set down most of them are settled. In the course of a fortnight the Court has now practically dealt with ninety enforcements and twelve compensation cases set down in the city list. When the country list has been dealt with there will be practically no enforcement cases worth mentioning pending in the colony. In each district visited the whole of these two classes of cases have been practically cleared off the list. The more important item is that of industrial disputes. These appear to number fifty-four now pending in the colony. This number is, however, misleading. There are, for instance, nine such set down on the West Coast, four of these are counter demands by employers which have no tendency to prolong proceedings. At the same time, several coal-mining disputes on the Coast may be really treated as one. The nine filed cases really represent three disputes. The same thing may be said of seamen's cases, of which four are filed in the colony. These have to be filed in several centres, and there are two unions in Wellington. There is really only one dispute. Again, generally, with respect to these disputes it must be borne in mind that by far the greater proportion are cases in which there are existing awards, the operation of which is extended by force of the Act. Of the nine cases in Wellington there is only one the parties to which are not under an award. No great inconvenience arises from some delay in hearing such cases as are provided for by past awards.

FRED. R. CHAPMAN.

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