

drivers' award on the 18th May, 1908. Before a union can make a claim, its rules must be altered to provide for admittance as members of those whose claim they prefer. (Vol. ix, Award, p. 336.)

Comparison between Minimum Rates under Awards and the Actual Rates paid.

In Table 6 appended to this report appears the result of an investigation, as far as factories are concerned, into the extent to which the Arbitration Court in fixing a minimum wage has or has not lowered the average wage, or injured high rates for especially good workers. It has so often been asserted with blind confidence that every award of a minimum wage has "levelled down" all wages, that it will come as a surprise to the general public to find how few workers have to accept the minimum wage, which is not, as has been so often stated, "the award wage," but a limit of wage below which no persons in that particular trade may be paid. In the bootmaking trade, for instance, in Auckland 66 per cent., in Wellington 85½ per cent., in Christchurch 66 per cent., and in Dunedin 50 per cent. of the workers receive wages above the minimum wage. In Auckland 91 per cent., in Wellington 57½ per cent., in Christchurch 50 per cent., and in Dunedin 26 per cent. of the cabinet-makers receive above the minimum wage named in the award. Plumbers and gasfitters receiving wages above the award minimum are—in Auckland 66 per cent., Wellington 19 per cent., in Christchurch 84 per cent., in Dunedin 59 per cent. It is of no use labouring the matter here by quoting figures too profusely, since the whole state of the case can be seen by any person studying the table, but the investigation has served to prick one of the bubbles so freely blown by opponents of the Act when trying to gain the sympathy of those whose wages have been for years protected by the industrial Courts from the undercutting of unscrupulous mates or the forcing-down methods of greedy exploiters.

Industrial Unions.

The returns for industrial unions do not cover the same period as this report. In accordance with statutory directions the unions are enumerated for the complete year (1st January to 31st December) and not for the financial year, 1st April to 31st March, the period covered by this report. For the last five years the membership of industrial unions was as follows:—

	Unions of Employers.		Unions of Workers.	
	Number of Unions.	Number of Members.	Number of Unions.	Number of Members.
December, 1904	109	3,292	273	30,271
" 1905	113	3,276	261	29,869
" 1906	109	3,337	274	34,978
" 1907	121	3,630	310	45,614
" 1908	122	3,918	325	49,347

This shows an increase of one employers' union, with an additional membership of 288, and an increase of fifteen workers' unions, with 3,733 added members during the year 1908. As the workers in unions in 1904 numbered 30,271, they have increased by over 19,000 in four years, a proof that the workers have not lost confidence in the value of the Act, in spite of weaknesses disclosed and of the exaggerations sent abroad as to its utter failure.

In the following table the unionists have been grouped into occupations during two different years—viz., 1903 and 1908 showing (in the five years noted in the last preceding table) the manner in which the increase of 78½ per cent. has been divided:—

Trade.	1903.	1908.	Increase per Cent.
Agriculture	1,235	2,781	125.1
Building	3,717	7,622	105.7
Clothing and textile	3,158	4,233	34.0
Engineering and shipbuilding	1,441	1,686	17.0
Food	2,297	4,905	113.5
Mining	4,145	5,187	25.1
Printing	708	1,173	65.6
Transport	7,749	16,538	113.4
Other trades	3,190	5,222	63.6
Totals	27,640	49,347	..
Increase of unionists	21,707	78.5