

Canterbury Saddlers, Harness and Collar Makers.—The Court said that the trade was not in a better condition than in 1907, and the union had not made out a case for increase in the existing minimum. (Vol. x, p. 357.)

Manawatu Flax-mill Employees.—The memo. attached to the award (p. 29) directed a conference to agree on a sliding scale of wages, to be regulated by the market price of flax. Such agreement was not arrived at, and the Court made an award. (Vol. xi, p. 29.)

Dunedin Bakers and Pastrycooks.—An interpretation *re* apprenticeship. An apprentice under the award must serve his master for four years, and the effect of the Court apprenticeship clause equals indenture. The relationship of master and apprentice cannot be dissolved without the consent of all the parties, employer and apprentice being equally bound to carry out the four-year provision. (Vol. xi, p. 79.)

Waimate Workers (Threshing-millers).—This case was interesting, as the question of a “third party” (other than employer and worker) was raised. Farmers claimed to be represented in Court on the plea that the nominal employer (threshing-mill owner) and worker might agree to a scale of payment for threshing which would seriously threaten the profits of the farmer, since the latter had ultimately to pay the cost of threshing, and indirectly is the employer. (Vol. x, p. 838.)

Auckland Cabmen.—A question was raised in this case as to the jurisdiction of the Court. In the ranks of the Cabmen’s Union of Workers were members who owned their own cabs and drove them, and also other members who drove on the share system. The Court held that the question of a so-called workers’ union containing men who were practically not workers did not deprive the union of the right to bring a case before the industrial Courts. The Judge suggested an amendment of the law. (Vol. x, p. 169.)

I omit reference to the two small strikes which occurred during the year, as the subject is dealt with in the report of Mr. Lomas, Chief Inspector of Factories, herewith.

Very great advantage in regard to rapidity of procedure and facility of administration resulted from the Stipendiary Magistrates dealing with cases of breach of award. Some drawbacks, however, have appeared in this connection, among which I may mention the different light in which one Magistrate regards industrial questions compared with another Magistrate’s views. Heavy fines are given by one Magistrate, nominal fines and dismissals by another, for similar or equal industrial offences. So also there is great loss of time in explaining technicalities in Magistrates’ Court—the Arbitration Court understands its own award, and needs no explanation.

The suggestion has been made, as a desirable direction for amendment in the Act, that “preference to unionists” in an award should apply only to those who are “financial”—i.e., who have kept their dues and fees properly paid up.

Separate reports from the Commissioners of Conciliation are presented herewith.

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

Again this year I append a table (6) of an investigation, as far as factories are concerned, showing rates paid to workers as compared with the minimum wage under awards, &c. For this purpose the wages of 7,374 workers have been compared. Of this number, 2,785 received the minimum wage, and 4,589 in excess of it, or a total of 62 per cent. In making this comparison, only the wages of persons over the age of twenty-one are taken; and on reference to the return it will show how each industry governed by an award is dealt with. Unfortunately, owing to the difficulty of making comparisons, some of our principal industries have not been dealt with, as the awards provide for two or three rates to be paid to certain classes of employees, and the schedules received from employers do not always separate the workmen into the various classes. However, there is sufficient evidence to show that in our manufacturing industries at least an average of 50 per cent. of the workers compared received more than the rate granted in the awards of the Court of Arbitration. Such a result must be exceedingly gratifying to those interested in the industrial legislation of the Dominion, especially in view of the fact that opponents of the Act have stated in and out of season that the majority of workers are receiving only the minimum wage, and that the work accomplished by the first-class man gets no more recognition than that of the ordinary employee who makes no special effort to deserve extra monetary reward. If this allegation is true in regard to workers outside manufacturing industries—which I very much doubt—the figures quoted by the Department in this report hardly bear out the contention in regard