

and when the worker wants his wages at the end of the week he is put off with perhaps a small portion, and after working for a few weeks the worker finds it impossible to get the wages due, and leaves. This has occurred on several occasions during the year. One employer of this kind has been prosecuted and fined heavily, but has no funds or property to pay the fine or wages owing, and continues in the same course—employing labour without any apparent chance or intention of paying the wages. This is not only a rank injustice to the worker, but is also absolutely unfair to the legitimate employer, who, by paying award wages, is unable to compete with this class of employer. It is a difficult problem, but some means should be devised to prevent these people from carrying on business in the way mentioned above.

The year has been a very busy one, over 600 complaints of breaches from various unions having been received. Some of these turn out to be groundless, or without sufficient evidence to support them; others are of a slight nature, and are committed inadvertently. The award giving the most work is the Cooks and Waiters' award. There have been 155 complaints under this award, and prosecutions have been taken in 16 cases. Fines amounting to £56 have been inflicted, and a sum of £60 7s. 7d. collected in back wages. In one case a firm was prosecuted under this award for dismissing a worker merely because she was entitled to the benefits of an award, and a fine of £5 was imposed.

There have been 10 prosecutions under the Builders' Labourers' award, fines amounting to £20 and back wages collected to £30 7s. 11d.

There has been a total number of 115 cases filed during the year, 50 of these being against workers for striking under the Wharf Labourers' award.

A case under the Bakers' award is worthy of notice. The award provides that "no work shall be done after 10 p.m. except on hot-cross-bun night." A firm of bakers employed four bakers between 10 p.m. and midnight on the day prior to Christmas Eve. The men worked the whole two hours, having started work at 10 p.m. The Magistrate dismissed the cases on the ground that it was not a breach of the above provision, and interpreted the provision to mean that where men were employed continuously from starting-time till 10 p.m. then it would be a breach to continue after 10 p.m., but it was not a breach of the above provision to start work at 10 p.m. This decision was appealed against, and the Arbitration Court reversed it, holding that there was an absolute prohibition against any work being done between 10 p.m. and midnight except on hot-cross-bun night. The appeal was allowed, with £5 5s. costs against the employer, and the case referred back to the Magistrate, who thereupon again dismissed it under section 21 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act Amendment Act, holding that the breach was excusable.

Proceedings have been taken in 7 instances for failing to keep proper time and wages books. One was dismissed on technical grounds, and fines inflicted in the other 6 cases. I have again to refer to the fact that while there is a distinct improvement in the majority of cases, there are still employers who are lax in respect to the keeping of proper books. It often happens that a dispute arises between a worker and employer as to hours worked extending back for a long period, and if no proper time-book has been kept investigations are very difficult, and the employer is probably called up to pay back wages, which he might not have been liable for if he had insisted upon the employee signing the time and wages book each week.

A feature of the work during the year has been the inspection of the sleeping-accommodation of the hotel and restaurant employees, and the sanitary condition of various restaurants and boarding-houses. In this work I have had the cordial assistance of Chief Inspector Schauer, of the Health Department. The complaints received have been mostly in respect to the cheap restaurants, and it must be confessed that some of these places in Wellington are not as up to date as one might desire, but the class for which these restaurants cater cannot afford to pay a high price, and they are really a necessary institution. The inspections made did not disclose anything definitely prejudicial to the health of the community, although in some instances certain alterations were ordered, and in other cases instructions were given for the accommodation to be thoroughly cleansed.

An alleged strike took place during the year in connection with the Wharf Labourers' award, and 49 workers were cited for taking part in a strike and 1 for inciting the workers to strike. The matter was referred to the Magistrate's Court, and, after taking evidence, a case was stated for the opinion of the Arbitration Court, and decision has not yet been received.

There are about 50 awards in operation in Wellington, and there is a large amount of work connected with these awards. A large number of employers are continually making inquiries *re* various matters in connection with them. During the year the whole of the factories and shops in Wellington have been visited, and where awards are in force general investigations as to same have been made. At your direction I also paid a visit of inspection to the sawmills in the Rangitikei district, and found that for the most part the employees were receiving more than the award rate of wages. In a few isolated instances men were receiving less than the proper rate. These were adjusted by the payment of back wages. While paying my visit to one of these country sawmills I found that the engine-driver had been sent away to work a distance from the mill, leaving the engine without a certificated man in charge. I reported this to the Inspector of Machinery, and the occupier of the mill was proceeded against, and fined for a breach of the Inspection of Machinery Act.

My work brings me into touch with a large variety of the public—workers, employers, and, last but not least, the secretaries of unions, both employers' and employees'—and notwithstanding that the business I am engaged in is sometimes not of the most pleasant nature, I am happy to say there has been very little friction during the year. I desire to express my sincere thanks to all the above for the courtesy and assistance given me whenever I have had any business with them.

I have, &c.,

W. NEWTON,

Inspector of Awards.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.