

and remained on strike for five weeks. During practically the whole of this time the boats were tied up to the wharves, and great inconvenience was caused at small coastal ports through increased freights and a disorganized service. On the men's side the loss in wages alone amounted to £6,000, and the approximate loss to employers concerned amounted to about £18,000.

The tramway strike was of a different nature, and was the outcome of friction between the men and a ticket inspector, and the whole of the tram service was at a standstill for a matter of six days. The inconvenience to the public during this time was very great, and the loss to the men in wages amounted to £893, and the approximate loss to the Council was £1,200.

Both of the above unions were brought before the Court, and a penalty of £100 was inflicted in each case. The Merchant Service Guild, however, has appealed against the Stipendiary Magistrate's decision in regard to their case.

A strike of meat-workers occurred at Petone and Ngahauranga, but as the men concerned were not bound by an award or the Act, the Department had no power to interfere.

The tendency of employers generally is to obey the awards, but, of course, there are a few who are continually looking for loopholes to escape all or any of the provisions of an award. It is this class of employer which causes nearly all the bitterness that occasionally exists on the part of the unions towards employers. However, I am satisfied that on the whole the awards are fairly well observed, and the breaches that are reported are not, as a rule, of a very serious nature. One hundred and eighty complaints were received *re* breaches of awards, and forty cases were proved before the Stipendiary Magistrate, and fines amounting to £42 15s. inflicted.

The following figures show the nature of the cases taken before the Court: Taking part in strike, 2; employing assistant on half-holiday, 1; breach of preference clause, 8; failing to pay wages weekly, 1; employing excess of weekly hands, 1; failing to pay for holidays, 1; employing casual boy-labour, 1; failing to pay travelling time, 3; failing to pay award rates, 14; failing to keep overtime and wages book, 2; failing to claim award rates, 4; absconding from apprenticeship, 1; failing to claim payment for holidays, 1; having bespoke work done off premises, 1; accepting weekly work when not sufficient pieceworkers employed, 1: total, 42.

The most frequent cause of complaint is in regard to the preference clauses, and, as my predecessor reported last year, I find that some employers are too ready to take a man's word as to whether he is a member of the union, with the result that a breach is committed.

It has also been found that some workers, while in the employ of a master, frequently assist in the evasion of an award, and do all in their power to prevent an Inspector from getting the facts. After they have left their employment, however (usually through a disagreement with the employer), they then go to the secretary of the union or an Inspector for the purpose of making a complaint, and for that reason it is not always wise to take the matter up unless the breach is a serious one.

Arrears of wages amounting to £64 18s. 3d., due by employers to workers, were collected and paid to the workers concerned.

In view of the difficulty that arose in June last through a special holiday (Coronation Day) occurring in the same week as an award holiday (Prince of Wales's Birthday), and as this position has often arisen in the past, I think the Act should be amended on the lines of section 19 of the Shops and Offices Act—that when any special day falls on another day, but in the same week as an award holiday, the Minister could by Proclamation in the *Gazette* invite the people in a certain district or throughout New Zealand, as the case may be, to observe the special day as a holiday, and that that day could then be legally observed in lieu of the award holiday. Employers and workers could then legally agree as to which day would be observed.

Under-rate workers' permits have been issued to workmen in the various trades as follows: Carpenters, 2; timber-workers, 2; collarmakers, 1; stonemasons, 1; plumbers, 1; furniture trade, 1: total, 8. There are very few applications of this nature received, considering there are nearly 50 awards in operation in this district, and it is seldom that an application is received from an able-bodied man. The permits that are granted are, as a rule, unopposed by the unions, owing to the fact that the worker is suffering from some disability.

I have, &c.,

D. CARMODY,

Inspector of Awards.

The Secretary of Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 10th April, 1912.

I beg to submit herewith my report on the administration of the various labour laws and other work of the Department in this district for the year ending the 31st March, 1912.

The year just closed has been a normal one. The amount of trade done in the retail trades has been very satisfactory, and trade has not fluctuated so much as in former years. There has been nothing to indicate greater prosperity, but, on the other hand, there was nothing to suggest a falling-off in volume of business. Money has been fairly plentiful. The slight dislocation of business caused by the transport strike in the Old Country, which considerably delayed the arrival of a large amount of early spring goods, and caused a late season in the drapery line, has, however, had its good effect, as it enabled shopkeepers to dispose of existing stock that is usually disposed of at sale prices.