

There were also twenty industrial agreements (filed under section 26) arrived at by the parties without the assistance of the Commissioners or Councils of Conciliation.

It will be seen that out of a total of 148 disputes, 138 (equal to 94 per cent.) were settled or substantially settled by the Commissioners and Councils of Conciliation.

Registration of Industrial Unions and Associations.

During the period twenty-three registrations were effected—viz., workers' unions, 17; employers' unions, 6. Of these, twenty were newly organized bodies, the remaining registrations being due to various alterations in the constitutions of the unions affected.

The usual statutory return (to 31st December, 1918) of the unions registered under the Act, with their membership at that date, is published herewith as Appendix H.—11A.

Comparison with the previous year's records shows that there has been an increase of two in the number of employers' unions, with a decrease in membership of forty-four. The total number of workers' unions decreased by twelve, and the total membership by 1,426.

Owing to there having been a large number of amendments to rules, many involving complete revision, this branch of the Department has been very busily engaged.

Decisions of Arbitration Court of Interest given during the Year.

Vol. xix, p. 648: In the action Registrar of Industrial Unions *v.* Canterbury Slaughtermen's Industrial Union of Workers the question for decision was whether an industrial union consisting of workers engaged in one industry may amalgamate with an industrial union of workers engaged in another industry if those industries are "related" within the meaning of section 24 of the Act. The answer was given in the negative by their Honours Sir Robert Stout, Mr. Justice Chapman, and Mr. Justice Stringer, as the section that provides for amalgamation restricts such action to unions in "the same industry" only.

Vol. xix, p. 718: The Denniston Coal-miners' Industrial Union of Workers claimed from each of its members 2s. 6d. for a levy to make good a deficiency in the union's funds. It was held that the use of the funds of an industrial union must be limited to the purposes of the Act (*e.g.*, the settlement of industrial disputes), and that as the money thus claimed was to be used to pay wages to a member imprisoned for sedition, and to pay travelling-expenses to another member charged with sedition, the defendant was justified in refusing payment. This judgment was upheld in the Supreme Court.

During last session an important amendment of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act was passed—and included in the War Legislation and Statute Law Amendment Act—providing that on an application being made, the Arbitration Court should have power to amend any award or industrial agreement in regard to wages or hours to meet any alteration in the conditions of employment or the cost of living that may have taken place since the award or agreement was made. This legislation came into operation on the 10th December last, and between that date and the 31st March, 1919, a large number of applications have already been made to the Court. In seventeen instances the Court has made amendments in accordance with the provision referred to. A considerable number has also been made since the 31st March.

In regard to proposals for amendment of the law relating to the settlement of industrial disputes, considerable interest attaches to the Garton memoranda and the Whitley reports in England. Already Industrial Councils in accordance with the reports of the Whitley Committee have been set up in England in a large number of industries. Proposals for amendment of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of New Zealand are now under the consideration of the Government.

Expenditure of Court and Councils.

The year's expenditure of Councils of Conciliation was £3,742, and that of the Court of Arbitration was £4,095; total, £7,837. This includes the salaries of the Conciliation Commissioners (£1,650) and of the members of the Court (£2,800). This is a reduction of £246 on last year's expenditure.

LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT.

As this Act applies only to those unions or societies of workers that have not registered their organizations under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act and obtained awards or industrial agreements thereunder, it is interesting to note that, while there were on the 31st March, 1919, 519 such awards and industrial agreements in force, only seven disputes had arisen under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act from its inception in 1913 to the 31st March, 1919. The seven disputes were settled after investigation. In two of the seven cases the unions were, in fact, registered under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and had each obtained an award or industrial agreement. It happened, however, that the latter did not cover the whole of their members, and agreements were therefore sought for the remainder by means of the Labour Disputes Investigation Act.

The above facts appear to show that, notwithstanding that a number of complaints have been made by members of unions against the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, the great body of the workers do not desire its repeal, but rather that it be improved upon by amendment. This conclusion is borne out by the resolutions passed at recent labour conferences. As already stated, proposals for amendment of the Act are under consideration.