

Expenditure of Councils and Court.

Councils of Conciliation, £3,981 (increase £239); Court of Arbitration, £4,244 (increase £149); total, £8,225. This includes the salaries of the Conciliation Commissioners (£1,750) and of the members of the Court (£2,800).

Registration of Industrial Unions and Associations.

During the period twenty-five new workers' unions and one employers' union were registered.

The usual statutory return (to 31st December, 1919) of the unions registered under the Act, with their membership at that date, is published herewith as an Appendix.

Comparison with the previous year's records shows that there has been a decrease of eight in the number of employers' unions, with a decrease in membership of 200. The total number of workers' unions increased by ten and the total membership by 1,105.

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.

A booklet, "Notes on the Registration of Industrial Unions under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, together with Specimen Rules," has been published by the Department. This booklet states as fully and clearly as possible the present law relating to industrial unions and associations, and contains four sets of specimen rules. It is hoped that the publication of this booklet will obviate the delay and misunderstanding that has in the past occasionally taken place in connection with the registration of rules, and that the booklet will be a convenience to industrial unions and associations.

Decisions of Interest given during the Year.

Case arising out of the Influenza Epidemic.—In a case taken in the Magistrate's Court by an Inspector of Awards against the licensee of a hotel it was decided that, provided the engagement has not been terminated by the requisite notice, an employer is obliged to pay wages to an employee during his temporary absence through sickness or for the period when places of business were closed by order of the District Health Officer during the influenza epidemic. This ruling, if applied to other cases, is of course subject to the terms of the engagement and to the provisions of any award or industrial agreement affecting it.—(Book of Awards, Vol. XX, p. 490.)

War Legislation and Statute Law Amendment Act, 1918, Section 18.—This section provides that the Court of Arbitration may, if it thinks fit, on the application of any industrial union, amend the provisions of an award or industrial agreement with respect to the rates of wages on account of the increase in the cost of living. In a memorandum dated 19th April, 1919, the Court gave an indication of the general principles upon which it is proposed to deal with applications under this section. For the purposes of uniformity it was proposed to fix the basic wages for skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers at 1s. 7½d., 1s. 4½d. to 1s. 6d., and 1s. 3½d. per hour respectively,* which wages should not be subject to variation during the currency of the award except that in addition a bonus would be given from time to time to compensate for the increase in the cost of living. The Court decided to adjust these bonuses half-yearly as at March and September in each year in accordance with the rise or fall in the cost of living as ascertained for the Dominion by the Government Statistician (Book of Awards, Vol. XX, p. 403). A very large number of increases of wages have been given under this provision.

Prosecutions.

During the year 777 prosecutions were instituted by the Department, of which two were against workers for breaches of an award and 119 were against employers for breaches of awards, agreements, and various provisions of the Act.

Proceedings were taken for nineteen strikes, nine against the unions concerned, and ten against the workers, numbering 647. Particulars of the chief cases are as follow :—

Industrial Disturbances.

There were sixty-five industrial disturbances during the year, thirty-nine of which involved the cessation of work for only one day or less, and may therefore be classed as trivial. In addition to the complete stoppages of work, a "go-slow" policy was put into operation in all the principal coal-mines in the Dominion in September, 1919, following on the refusal of the mine-owners to accept the miners' terms at a conference in Wellington. At a second conference in February, presided over by the Prime Minister, an agreement was reached, and normal work was, it is understood, resumed about the 1st March. We are informed that the approximate loss in output due to the operation of the go-slow policy amounted to 186,850 tons in all, and the estimated loss in wages to £50,790.

The following is a short statement of the more serious of the other industrial disputes that required attention within the period :—

Otaihape Slaughtermen and Freezing-works Assistants.—Eighty-five employees demanded an increase in wages on the rates being paid to them in pursuance of an award of the Arbitration Court. The increase was granted on the understanding that the men would work harmoniously for the remainder of the year. On the following morning demands relating to dining-room accommodation and improved cooking facilities were made, and the workers, not receiving an immediate reply from the manager, who had to submit the matter to his directors, struck work. The demands were conceded, and the men resumed after being out for three days. Proceedings were taken. Five were fined £5 each, forty-six others £1 each, while in the remaining cases proceedings are pending.

Butchers in Retail Trade, Auckland.—Demands for increased wages were made, and, not receiving a reply within the time stipulated, the members of the union, numbering approximately 250, struck. After the strike had lasted three weeks the dispute was settled by adopting as a basis the wages

*These basic wages have, since the 31st March, 1920, been fixed by the Court at 2s. per hour for skilled workers, 1s. 8d. to 1s. 10d. for semi-skilled workers, and 1s. 7d. for unskilled workers.