

satisfactory on the whole, and that the frequent reference to industrial unrest, which does not exist to any great extent, is not warranted.

A good deal of criticism has, of late years, been made respecting the work of the Arbitration Court and also regarding the constitution of that Court. In this connection it may be interesting to point out that the intention of the original Act was primarily to abolish "sweating" by fixing minimum wages for any workers that chose to register thereunder, leaving the ordinary law of supply and demand to determine the actual wages to be paid, and in this the Court has fulfilled its purpose; but the minimum wages have been in many cases forced into what has become a standard wage, with a tendency to levelling the workers' wages up and down towards that amount. The fixing of a standard wage is no doubt practicable enough in unskilled or semi-skilled employments like those of waterside workers and coal-miners, but in skilled occupations some supplementary machinery (such as the setting-up of a shop committee for each establishment) seems to be required to fix the actual conditions, over and above the minimum, for the particular workers concerned, according to their skill.

LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT.

Very few industrial disputes have come within the scope of this Act since its inception in 1913, nearly all unions evidently preferring to maintain their registrations under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act and have their disputes dealt with thereunder.

Four disputes were heard during the period under review. The unions concerned were all situated in Auckland, and the claims were for increased wages and improved conditions. With one exception satisfactory settlements were arrived at and agreements filed. Particulars of the four cases are as follow:

Disputes dealt with under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, 1913, during Year ending 31st March, 1920.

Industry affected.	Action taken.	Ballot of Workers.	Nature of Settlement.	Reference.
Abattoir ..	The workers affected were members of the Auckland Slaughtermen's Union the registration of which under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act had been cancelled by the members. A conference was called by the Conciliation Commissioner, at which a full settlement was reached	Not necessary ..	Agreement filed pursuant to section 8 (1), Labour Disputes Investigation Act	Vol. xx, p. 615.
Fire brigades ..	The existing award was determined pursuant to clause 7 thereof on account of the union concerned affiliating with the United Federation of Labour. A conference was called by the Conciliation Commissioner	Not necessary ..	The settlement arrived at was embodied in an agreement and a supplementary agreement filed pursuant to section 8 (1)	Vol. xx, pp. 691, 773.
Gas-production	A conference called by the Conciliation Commissioner proving abortive, a Labour Dispute Committee was constituted, with Mr. E. C. Cutten, S.M., as Chairman	Not necessary ..	An agreement was arrived at and filed pursuant to section 8 (1)	Vol. xx, p. 1418.
Slaughtering ..	Dispute referred directly to a Labour Dispute Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. E. C. Cutten, S.M.	Ballot conducted favouring strike. No strike took place	No settlement was reached.	

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

During the year the Court of Arbitration heard and determined twenty-six cases under this Act, in eighteen of which oral judgment was delivered. No case calls for special mention.

SHEARERS' AND AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACTS.

Shearers.—In November last a new Shearers' Accommodation Bill, setting out in detail the accommodation to be provided, was passed by Parliament, to come into operation on the 1st July, 1920. In the requisitions that have been served during the year Inspectors have had regard to the requirements of the new Act in order that sheepowners may not be put to the expense of providing certain accommodation that year under the existing Act and having to alter it next year in pursuance of the 1919 Act. The visits of inspection made to sheep-stations numbered 716, and 380 notices to effect improvements were served. In a number of instances the accommodation had so far fallen into decay that entirely new accommodation was ordered. Owing to the shortage of labour and material, however, it has been found necessary in some cases to extend the time allowed in order to enable employers to complete the work. In three instances cases were taken in the Magistrate's Court to have the notices enforced. Fresh notices were subsequently served on the owners to provide accommodation in pursuance of the new Act.

Sawmill Employees.—169 inspections made, and thirty-one notices served to effect alterations. There have been considerable improvements in the housing conditions as a result. One case was taken in the Magistrate's Court against an employer in order to have the notice enforced.

Threshing-mill Employees.—Thirty-nine inspections were made, and in four instances it was necessary to serve notices to improve the accommodation. A clause in the Arbitration Court's award governing this industry sets out in detail the accommodation that is to be provided for the workers.