

of hours permitted by the Act was reduced from fifty-two to forty-eight, in consistence with the general movement towards the 48-hours week.

The Arbitration Court was empowered in the amendment to fix not only the hours of employment of workers in accordance with its ordinary jurisdiction under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, but to fix the closing-hours of all shops in the industry in the district. This was deemed necessary on account of the unfair competition that has been complained of between those shopkeepers who were compelled by reason of the awards or industrial agreements to close their shops in order to release their assistants at the hours fixed by the awards, as against those other shopkeepers in a smaller way of business who, by reason of the fact that they employ no assistants or at all events only one or two of them, were able to keep open and carry on their business until a late hour.

The amendment also fixed the closing-hour of 6 o'clock on four days other than the day of the half-holiday, and 9 o'clock on the late night, for all shops excepting those engaged in special trades, such as bakers, news agents, hairdressers, and the like, in the principal towns of the Dominion—namely, those comprising a population of six thousand and upwards—the four chief centres, the towns of Gisborne, Napier, Hastings, Hamilton, and so on. Special provision was made in a subsequent amendment passed early this year enabling a Magistrate to grant exemption to any small shopkeeper on the ground of undue hardship, and this provision was taken advantage of by a considerable number of such shopkeepers.

The amendment also extended the principle established by section 25 (8) of the principal Act to all trades—that is to say, in any case where the shopkeepers principally engaged in any trade have by a majority vote fixed the closing-hours of all such shopkeepers in the district, it is now unlawful for any other shopkeepers carrying on that trade as a minor portion of their business to sell the goods comprised therein after the closing-hours fixed. It is recommended that in the next legislation this principle might be applied to the sale of goods in all cases where particular classes of shops are required to be closed at certain hours, such as the foregoing provision fixing 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock closing.

The only remaining alteration of importance contained in the Bill renders shop-assistants liable for breaches of the Act as well as the owners. This is the same principle as has been contained in the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act in regard to awards and industrial agreements for several years.

Proposed further Amendment.

In accordance with instructions the Shops and Offices Act and its several amendments have been consolidated and revised with a view to the introduction of a complete Bill next session.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

	1919-20.	1920-21.
Industrial agreements filed	51	31*
Recommendations of Councils of Conciliation	168	250
Awards of the Court of Arbitration	131	220

* Inclusive of 23 made between parties without reference to a Conciliation Commissioner or Council.

The awards and industrial agreements actually in force on the 31st March, 1921, totalled 563.

Work performed by Commissioners and Councils of Conciliation during the Year.

	Commissioner T. Harle Giles.	Commissioner W. Newton.	Commissioner W. H. Hagger.	Total.
Industrial agreements arrived at and filed as such under section 26 by parties through the Commissioner alone	..	6	..	6
Disputes dealt with by Conciliation Councils—				
Where industrial agreements were filed under section 26	..	2	..	2
Where accepted recommendations were made (under section 7, Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Amendment Act, 1911)	..	..	..	..
Where recommendations were fully accepted and forwarded to the Court to be made into awards	48	47	71	166
Where recommendations were substantially accepted or agreements reached and referred to Court to make awards	15	22	25	62
Where only minor recommendation or no recommendation was made	4	7	11	22
Totals	67	84	107	258

It will be seen that out of a total of 258 disputes dealt with by the Commissioners and Conciliation Councils, 236 (equal to 91·5 per cent.) were settled or substantially settled by them without recourse to the Arbitration Court.