

or businesses whether or not assistants were employed therein. This provision was made on account of complaints by shopkeepers with assistants that in order to release their assistants at the times fixed by the awards they were compelled to close their shops while smaller shops in the vicinity and in the same trades could be kept open. A number of awards have accordingly been made fixing the closing-hours, and in consequence a considerable number of complaints have been received from the occupiers of the small shops; this has occurred particularly since the general shop-assistants' award was made covering most of the Dominion. The Court is already empowered to grant exemption to such shops if "undue hardship" is shown, but it is suggested that this provision might with advantage on the whole to all concerned, and in the public interest, be amended, first, to authorize the granting of exemptions where it is shown that unfair competition with other shopkeepers would not be caused and also having regard to the public interest, and, second, to place the consideration of exemptions in the hands of local Magistrates, who, being continuously on the spot, are better able to deal with such detail matters than the Court itself, whose functions extend over the whole Dominion.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

	1923-24.	1924-25.
Industrial agreements filed	18	22
Recommendations of Councils of Conciliation	118	153
Awards of the Court of Arbitration	91	135

The awards and industrial agreements actually in force on the 31st March, 1925, total 488 (last year 551). The continued reduction in the number of awards and agreements in force is accounted for by the fact that industrial associations (of unions) have taken advantage of the provisions in the 1922 amendment enabling them to apply for awards covering two or more industrial districts (commonly called "Dominion" awards); twenty-five such awards have been made taking the place of a considerably larger number of district or local awards. The number of members of workers' unions has increased during the year by 2,384, from 94,438 to 96,822, showing that while the number of awards and agreements in force is less they nevertheless cover a larger number of persons.

The increase in the number of recommendations of Councils of Conciliation and awards of the Court of Arbitration made during the year is accounted for by the fact that, following the expiration of the cost-of-living legislation, and the resumption of the normal methods of settling disputes, unions and associations have filed a greater number of applications with a view to obtaining increases in the minimum rates of wages and other benefits.

WORK PERFORMED BY COMMISSIONERS AND COUNCILS OF CONCILIATION DURING THE YEAR.

	Commissioner P. Hally.	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	5	2	10	17
Disputes dealt with by Conciliation Councils—				
Where industrial agreements were filed under section 26.	1	..	..	1
Where recommendations were fully accepted and forwarded to the Court to be made into awards	30	12	42	84
Where recommendations were substantially accepted or agreements reached and referred to Court to make awards	11	21	11	43
Where only minor recommendation or no recommendation was made	4	11	11	26
Totals	51	46	74	171

Out of the total of 171 disputes dealt with by the Commissioners and Conciliation Councils, 145 (equal to 84·79 per cent.) were thus settled or substantially settled by them without recourse to the Court of Arbitration. The proportion so settled last year was 92·3, and the previous year 78·98.

REGISTRATIONS OF INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATIONS AND UNIONS.

The usual statutory return (to the 31st December, 1924) of the associations and unions registered under the Act, with their membership at that date, is published herewith as an Appendix. Comparison with the previous year shows that the total number of workers' unions has decreased by two (due to the absorption of some of the smaller unions into larger bodies), but the total membership has increased by 2,384.