

Preference.—In an application for awards for shearers the question of granting a preference clause was raised on behalf of the unions concerned. Following its previous practice the Court declined to grant preference because of the difficulty in remote districts of obtaining shearers and shed hands on short notice, and because small farmers and their sons add to their incomes by shearing for their more prosperous neighbours. The Court made it clear that its decision not to grant preference to unionists was in no way intended as a penalty, but was entirely due to the impossibility of granting preference on practicable conditions. It provided, however, that employers should not discriminate against unionists, or do anything, directly or indirectly, to the detriment of the union. (Book of Awards, Vol. XXVI, pp. 629-754.)

INDUSTRIAL DISTURBANCES DURING THE YEAR.

There were in all forty industrial disturbances during the year, of which twenty-seven may be classed as unimportant or trivial. The following is a summary of the remaining thirteen disturbances :—

Coal-miners, Glen Afton.—264 men ceased work for thirty working-days in consequence of the appointment of two men as hewers over the heads of miners said to be more experienced. The management finally appointed as additional hewers two men who had been passed over, and agreed to a conference to deal with some other grievances. The men were bound by an award under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, but in the circumstances it was decided to take no action against them for striking.

Coal-miners, Hikurangi.—The management refused to make up to the minimum rate specified in the award the piecework wages of two men who it was claimed had been working in a deficient place; 151 men thereupon ceased work and remained on strike for eighteen working-days. A conference of the parties recommended that the wages demanded be paid in this instance, but arranged for the payment in future of one of the workers by results only. Proceedings taken under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act were withdrawn upon the receipt of assurances from the union that the offence would not be repeated.

Coal-miners, Ohai (Southland).—A coal company discharged twenty-six of its miners on account of slackness of trade; eighteen of the remaining miners ceased work in protest, their contention being that the company should keep the whole of its employees on the pay-sheets and share the work that was available. Eleven of the strikers were replaced immediately by "free labour," and within three weeks the mine was again fully manned. Though the men were bound by the strike provisions of the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, it was not deemed necessary to take proceedings against them.

Coal-miners, Ohai (Southland).—In this instance it had been the practice to base the wages payable for coal hewn on the weight that had been indicated by one truck-load; the men became dissatisfied and demanded that each load be weighed in future. The management refused, and the mine was closed down for seven days. It was then leased to a mine-deputy, who agreed with the men upon an increased rate which would allow for variations in weight. Although both the company and the workers were bound by the provisions of the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, it was not in the circumstances considered a case for prosecution.

Coal-miners, Paparoa.—Eighty miners adopted a "go-slow" policy for four days and then ceased work for two days. No reason was offered for this behaviour, which is considered to have been caused by a dispute among the men themselves. This was not a "strike" within the meaning of the Act.

Coal-miners, Paparoa.—As the usual pay-day would fall on Christmas Day, the men demanded that wages be paid upon the 23rd December and up to the time of ceasing work on the previous day. This the management considered impracticable, and in consequence a stoppage occurred from the 20th to the 24th December. Proceedings were taken against seventy-four men for a breach of the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, and convictions were obtained.

Coal-miners, Runanga.—376 men ceased work for five days in consequence of a deduction made from their wages for time lost through the accidental breaking-down of the ventilation apparatus. Work was resumed upon the management agreeing to appoint a whole-time fan-attendant. The question of a refund of the deduction was held over for the decision of the Minister of Mines upon his next visit to the locality. A breach of the Labour Disputes Investigation Act was committed, but no action was taken.

Coal-miners, Stockton.—150 men ceased work for six days in consequence of the dismissal of a loco-driver who had refused to carry out a particular duty. The opportunity was then taken by the men to claim certain "yardage" and "wet-time" rates. A conference with the owners arranged by the West Coast Miners' Council decided (1) that the loco-driver was in the wrong, and (2) that the demand for the special rates was justified. A breach of the Labour Disputes Investigation Act was committed, but it was decided not to take proceedings for the offence.

Freezing-workers, Patea.—The employees had agreed with the company to accept a certain rate of pay for killing "day-old calves" which was lower than the rate fixed by the award for the killing of calves generally. The killing of day-old calves was an innovation not contemplated when the award was made. Intervention by the union resulted in a cessation of work pending a settlement of the matter. A disputes committee set up under the award decided upon a rate lower than the award rate but higher than the rate previously agreed upon. The stoppage lasted eight days. The men were bound by the strike provisions of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, but in the circumstances it was decided not to take any action.

Freezing-works Employees.—Immediately prior to the commencement of the freezing season in Hawke's Bay in November the union asked for a 10-per-cent. increase upon the award rates, claiming that they were entitled to the benefit of the Court's recent decision to raise its basic rates by 1d. per hour, and proposed a conference to discuss the matter. The employers refused to grant an increase or to take part in a conference, stating that the 1d.-per-hour increase referred to was already included