

Auckland Tramwaymen's (with 1,051 members) cancelled registration during the year. On the other hand, a seamen's union which had previously cancelled registration re-registered under the Act (1,306 members). The large unions of workers that have elected to remain outside the Act were at the end of the year nine coal-miners' unions, comprising 2,302 members at the time of deregistration (while eleven other coal-miners' unions are still registered (with 1,918 members)), two marine engineers' unions (comprising 634 members), and two tramway employees' unions (1,300 members). No change has taken place in the number of employers' unions.

INSPECTIONS, ETC.

During the year 2,878 complaints of breaches of awards and industrial agreements, &c., were received and investigated. Apart from these, a large proportion of the general inspections of factories, shops, &c., totalling 36,937, included an inspection to ascertain whether the awards and agreements were being complied with in respect of wages, overtime, &c.

There were 331 prosecutions for such breaches other than stoppages of work—284 against employers and 47 against workers; 270 convictions were recorded. No case calls for comment. Proceedings were also taken for three strikes—one (under the strike provisions of the Act) against twelve workers in the shearing industry; convictions were obtained. In the other two cases ninety-six workers in the freezing industry were prosecuted under the award, which provided that any dispute arising should be settled by a Disputes Committee and that work should not be interrupted. Total penalties imposed, £508.

UNION ACCOUNTS.

There has been no occasion during the year to call for an audit of the accounts of any union. A few instances have again been brought under the notice of unions, however, of small amounts of union funds being used for purposes not authorized by the Act.

LEGAL DECISIONS OF INTEREST.

Benefit of Agreement.—An unregistered organization of seamen (which had recently cancelled its registration under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act) entered into an agreement with the employers relating to conditions of employment. Subsequently certain sections of the seamen re-registered as industrial unions under the Act, while other members registered as a trade-union under the Trade-unions Act. In an action taken by a member of the latter against officials of one of the industrial unions for damages for preventing him from procuring employment as a seaman the Magistrate was asked to determine, incidentally, which of the unions concerned should be regarded as having entered into the agreement above mentioned. The Magistrate decided that neither union, as a union, was so entitled, but that the agreement (which was valid under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, 1913) enured for the benefit of those workers who were at the date of the signing of the agreement members of the unregistered organization. (Book of Awards, Vol. XXVII, p. 659.)

Enforceability of Agreement.—An employer company took action under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, 1913, against a union of coal-miners to which its employees belonged, for breach of an agreement relating to terms of employment. The union was a society of workers within the meaning of the Act (not being registered under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act), but neither party to the agreement had taken advantage of the provisions of the Act enabling the agreement to be filed. The Magistrate held that, as the agreement had not been filed, there was no liability for penalty for breach of it. (This decision was upheld on appeal.) (Book of Awards, Vol. XXVIII, p. 11.)

Preference.—Two industrial unions of carpenters and joiners have been for many years registered in North Canterbury, and in the award each has been given an equal right to preference of employment for its members, subject in each case to the rules of the union conforming to the usual conditions specified in the preference clauses of awards. (Book of Awards, Vol. XXVIII, p. 162.)

Preference.—In a joint application for revision of the current award for freezing-works employees the Court was asked by the employers to withhold preference on the ground that members of one of the applicant unions had refused to accept engagement in a particular district at the beginning of the season. As the men had not broken an existing engagement, the circumstances did not bring the occurrence within the definition of a strike, and there was no evidence to show that any of the applicant unions, as a body, had been involved. The Court therefore refused to withhold preference, but included in the preference clause a provision by which preference to unionists might be revoked in respect of any establishment or establishments, if circumstances warranted such a course being taken. (Book of Awards, Vol. XXVII, p. 149.)

INDUSTRIAL DISTURBANCES DURING THE YEAR.

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

Coal-miners, Pukemiro (Auckland).—In filling vacancies for the hewing of coal the company passed over two men who, the union contended, should, under an agreement with the employers, have been given priority on account of their seniority of service, and 248 men ceased work as a protest. Negotiations resulted in places being found for the men passed over, and work was resumed after a stoppage of four working-days. Although the men were liable under the Labour Disputes Investigation Act, 1913, for taking part in an unlawful strike, it was not considered necessary in the circumstances to take proceedings, as the men appeared to have some justification for their action.

Coal-miners, Millerton (West Coast).—The management refused to fire a shot because it had not been prepared by the men in accordance with the regulations under the Coal-mines Act. The miners, supported by their union, decided to do no further work until the shot was fired. The management offered to pay the men concerned to prepare the shot properly, but the union officials would not agree