

Amongst the powers given to the Court of Arbitration under the principal Act is that of ordering any employer or employers to employ a minimum number of apprentices. This provision was suggested by several representative employers in New Zealand, who had expressed the view that, while most employers realize the necessity of providing a sufficient number of journeymen for the future, a number of others did not do so. The power given to the Court has so far not been used. As already stated, employers, on the whole, are already employing a fair proportion of apprentices. As mentioned last year, a similar question has arisen in France, where it is proposed to set up classes for the training of boys in industries in those cases in which employers are not themselves training a sufficient number. The cost of the classes would be met by means of a levy upon the industries benefited, with exemptions in the case of those employers who are themselves training a sufficient number. In this connection it might be pointed out that section 21 of the New Zealand Act provides that if the majority of employers in any industry in a locality is desirous of establishing an institution in which boys would receive technical instruction the Court of Arbitration may order all the employers in the industry and locality to contribute towards the cost of such training. The first case of this kind arose in Auckland; it was felt there that the apprentices in the motor mechanics' industry (Vol. XXVA, p. 672) could not be thoroughly trained in ordinary garages. Similar orders have since been made in the tinsmithing and sheet-metal working (Vol. XXVA, p. 894), plumbing (Vol. XXVA, p. 1246), and recently in the painting trades (Vol. XXVII, p. 393).

The following additional powers are given to the Court, which it has, pursuant to section 6, delegated to the respective Apprenticeship Committees:—

Section 5 (4) (k): To visit and inquire at any place where apprentices are employed as to the progress of the apprentices. There is still some hesitation and difficulty in instituting visits by committees, but this hesitancy is to a certain extent being overcome; three hundred and thirty such visits were made during the year. It is not expected, however, that this work, which is considered essential for the successful operation of the Act, can be adequately carried out by committees, as it must necessarily be done during working-hours; and, moreover, a member of a Committee does not care to criticize the work of a competitor. The Department has therefore continued its policy of making available the services of some of its experienced Inspectors for the purpose of assisting committees in this direction. In pursuance of this arrangement 564 special inspections have been made by Inspectors at the request of committees, in addition to which Inspectors themselves in the course of their ordinary inspection have made 4,371 inspections.

Section 5 (4) (b): To cancel any contract of apprenticeship—for instance, where the committee is satisfied that the apprentice is not suited to the industry. Seventy-two contracts have been cancelled—seventy by committees, one by agreement of the parties, and one by order of the Court.

Section 5 (4) (c): To prohibit an employer from employing an apprentice. This may be done, for example, on account of lack of facilities for instruction, or because the trade is not a suitable industry in which to train apprentices, or until an employer can show that he is sufficiently established in business to continue as an employer. In thirty-one cases employers have been prohibited by committees under this section from taking apprentices—viz., baking, 1; painting, 3; plumbing, 12; electrical working, 2; bootmaking, 2; bricklaying, 1; carpentering, 3; cabinetmaking, 3; plastering, 3; and printing, 1. In order to facilitate supervision by committees under this subsection, the Court has, at the request of committees, made eighteen orders (covering ten trades), requiring each employer to apply to a committee (where such has been set up in the locality) for permission to employ an apprentice.

Section 5 (4) (d): To order the transfer of any apprentice to another employer who is willing to take him—for example, where the committee considers better or further training can thus be obtained. Fourteen such orders have been issued on account of the first employers' inability to teach.

Section 5 (4) (g): To order the attendance of any apprentices at a technical school, either in their own time, or in their employers' time if sufficient facilities for complete training are not provided by the employer. Twenty-one committees, covering fourteen trades, have ordered all apprentices and six committees have ordered thirty-nine individual apprentices to attend technical schools in their own time. In one instance the Court also made an order that all apprentices should attend the technical school. Extra remuneration has been provided for in twelve trades upon the boys obtaining certificates showing satisfactory progress made at the schools. No orders appear to have been made requiring employers to give time off to their apprentices to attend technical schools; the furniture trade committee in Wanganui has, however, agreed to two hours on Saturday morning being given for the purpose in the employer's time.

In regard to the provision of supplementary training of apprentices in technical schools generally, considerable progress has been made. The view was expressed by many employers prior to the passing of the Act that the technical-school training generally was of little value to industry; close co-operation between the technical-school authorities and the members of the Apprenticeship Committees is being brought about, and, as the Apprenticeship Committees comprise experts in the respective trades their advice is of the greatest value, and this is being recognized by the Technical School Directors. Members of Apprenticeship Committees are being consulted in regard to the setting-up of classes and the framing of syllabuses; their assistance is also sought in the direction of visiting classes from time to time and in the conduct of examinations.

Section 5 (4) (h): To order the examination of apprentices. Ten committees, covering thirteen trades, have ordered such examinations. In Wanganui considerable interest continues to be taken in the careers of apprentices by the several committees, which have established a combined committee to co-ordinate their work and to act on their behalf on general questions. The committees arranged during the year for examinations of the apprentices in conjunction with the Technical School authorities, and at a special public meeting prizes were distributed to the successful candidates.

Section 5 (4) (i): To order that any increase in wages due to an apprentice may be withheld—for example, on account of negligence or carelessness of the apprentice. In two cases—painting and engineering trades—the committees made such orders.