

Complaints were received regarding 83 alleged breaches of the Act, while 54 other breaches were discovered by the Department's Inspectors, 101 warnings being issued.

There were 6 prosecutions during the year for various breaches of the Act and the orders made thereunder, convictions being entered in 4 of the cases, and penalties amounting to £4 being imposed. Of the prosecutions, 3 were against employers and 3 against apprentices.

The following table gives the approximate number of apprentices in the trades to which the Act applies. This information is based mainly on contracts of apprenticeship as registered with the Department.

RETURN SHOWING NUMBER OF APPRENTICES EMPLOYED IN SKILLED TRADES, APRIL, 1935.

(The figures for the previous year are shown in parentheses.)

Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.
Baking ..	106 (153)	Electrical ..	241 (287)	Plumbing ..	239 (300)
Boatbuilding ..	8 (11)	Engineering ..	357 (524)	Plastering ..	40 (68)
Boilermaking ..	12 (37)	Motor-engineering ..	514 (659)	Printing ..	487 (538)
Bootmaking ..	152 (136)	Furniture ..	279 (312)	Saddlery ..	17 (24)
Boot-repairing ..	20 (19)	Gardening ..	15 (14)	Sail, tent, &c. ..	.. (1)
Blacksmithing ..	16 (21)	Hairdressing ..	53 (78)	Tailoring ..	10 (14)
Bricklaying ..	8 (15)	Hatmaking ..	1 ..	Tinsmithing ..	77 (92)
Carpentering ..	321 (505)	Jewellery ..	26 (28)	Wicker-working ..	11 (13)
Clothing ..	67 (51)	Leadlight ..	5 (16)		
Coachbuilding ..	87 (140)	Masonry ..	11 (16)		
Coopering ..	6 (5)	Moulding ..	32 (62)		
Cycle-working ..	14 (12)	Painting ..	97 (152)	Totals ..	3,329 (4,303)

The following table shows the number of apprentices employed in each year since 1928 :—

April,	Number of Apprentices.	April,	Number of Apprentices.
1928 ..	10,227	1932 ..	6,910
1929 ..	9,943	1933 ..	5,594
1930 ..	9,826	1934 ..	4,303
1931 ..	8,901	1935 ..	3,329

The decline in the number of apprentices employed in skilled trades is a serious problem, not only from the point of view of finding employment for boys, but also from the effect the shrinkage will have upon the skilled trades in the future.

It is interesting to compare the figures contained in the above table with one showing the number of boys and girls under sixteen years of age who have commenced employment in factories during the year (see page 3 of this report). Few of these young persons have been taken on as apprentices in the skilled trades under the provisions of the Apprentices Act, 1923. It would appear that, apart from the effect of trade conditions on apprenticeships, there is an extreme reluctance on the part of employers to take on apprentices under the existing provisions.

Power is given to the Court of Arbitration under the Apprentices Act to order any employer or employers to employ a minimum number of apprentices. This power has not been used.

The provisions of section 56 of the Finance Act, 1932, which give Magistrates power, on application by any party concerned, to amend, suspend, or cancel any contract of apprenticeship in force at the date of the passing of the Act, are still being invoked owing to the difficulty experienced by employers in finding employment for their apprentices. Before a Magistrate, however, can cancel a contract under this section he is required to be satisfied that, owing to the economic conditions affecting the industry concerned or the particular business of the employer, the employer cannot reasonably be expected to continue to carry out the terms of the contract, but in the event of his ordering cancellation of the contract he may, if he thinks fit, award compensation to the apprentice.

Sixteen applications were dealt with under this legislation during the year ended the 31st March, 1935, 2 contracts being suspended, 2 cancelled, and 11 varied. In 1 case relief was refused.

ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £5,832 17s. 10d. were collected by the Department's officers on behalf of workers who had been underpaid the wages prescribed by awards and the various Acts, while further amounts of such arrears, totalling £5,037 9s. 11d., were paid by employers, at the instance of the Inspectors, directly to the workers concerned: total, £10,870 7s. 9d.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

During the year 111 cases were heard and determined by the Court of Arbitration (previous year, 138).

The more important decisions, with a digest thereof, are published in "New Zealand Workers' Compensation Cases," which is issued annually by the Department.