

Average duration of all strikes (trivial cases not included) ...	(days)	10
Total number of strikers (trivial cases not included) ...		2,275
Total number of men rendered idle by strikes (trivial cases not included) ...		4,523
Approximate loss in wages to workmen concerned (average £6 10s.) ...		£29,132
Approximate loss to employers concerned... ..		£37,134
Total amount of fines inflicted on strikers		£1,968
Total amount collected to date (71½ per cent.)		£1,410

Total number of strikes from year to year—

1894 to 1905	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil
1906	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
1907	...	...	...	...	...	...	12*
1908	...	...	...	...	...	...	12
1909	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
1910	...	...	...	...	...	...	13
1911-12	...	...	...	...	...	...	21
Total	...	...	...	...	...	...	63†
Average per year	...	...	...	...	...	...	3½

In the course of their investigations of alleged breaches of awards, particularly in respect to hotels and restaurants, the Inspectors have had occasion to report the fact that numbers of employers of labour enter into business either without capital or without the necessary financial support to enable them to pay wages in the event of their business not proving successful. It appears to be a somewhat frequent occurrence for employers to commence business in this way, and I think it is desirable that something should, if possible, be done to prevent persons entering into business in the manner above indicated.

The clause contained in most awards providing for preference to unionists has, until recently, been very difficult to enforce. The requirement of these awards that an employment-book must be kept by the unions concerned—showing correct information as to the members of the unions from time to time out of employment, the nature of the work they are able to do, the names of the employers with whom they have been recently employed, &c.—is somewhat troublesome for union secretaries to comply with, and in some cases of alleged offences under the preference clause committed by employers the Department has been unable to take proceedings on account of the fact that the employment-books to be kept by the unions had not been properly kept. A more workable provision regarding preference is now generally contained in the various awards—viz., that when a non-member of a union is engaged by an employer the secretary of the union shall be entitled, if there be a member of his union able to do the work equally with the non-member, to call upon the employer to dismiss the non-member from his employment within seven days unless in the meantime the non-member joins the union. This clause is proving more satisfactory in the working to both employers and workers.

A case of some importance concerning the relationships of different sections of workers in one industry came before the Court of Arbitration during the year—viz., the application of the Merchant Service Guild for an award providing for the working-conditions of employment of masters and officers. In this case a question was submitted for the opinion of the Court as to whether masters and officers should be dealt with in the same industrial dispute. In giving its opinion the Court said that it is doubtless essential in the interests of the travelling public that nothing should be done to weaken the authority of the shipmaster or to impair the discipline of the ship; that the interests of the public safety are of paramount importance: these questions, however, were questions for the Legislature to deal with. Under the Act as it at present stands shipmasters and officers are workers within the meaning of the Act—they are all engaged in one industry, and are entitled to form one union. Further, such a union is entitled to originate a dispute in connection with both shipmasters and officers and to have it disposed of. The Court thought it desirable, however, that, in view of the peculiar position of a shipmaster with regard to his officers, the dispute should be divided into two branches—one relating to masters and the other to officers. This decision opens up a somewhat large question as to whether the clauses of the Act relating to registration of unions should not make better provision to enable workers

* Slaughtermen only. † Of this total, twelve strikes were of slaughtermen—practically one sympathetic dispute spread over the whole of the Dominion. Six were within the scope of the Act, and six outside it.