

Section 10 empowers the committee (or the Court) to authorize two or more employers in the same locality to enter into a contract with the same apprentice. One such contract has been approved in the motor-engineering trade in Auckland. This provision of the Act was copied from an Australian Act, and was inserted to meet the case of intermittent trades such as building; the several employers would jointly undertake the responsibility of teaching a boy, transferring him from one of their number to another as the circumstances rendered necessary.

Section 11 empowers a committee (or the Court) to authorize special contracts of apprenticeship in the cases of adults or other persons already possessing some knowledge of an industry. The duty of the committee or Court is to see that an employer does not obtain an undue advantage by thus securing the services of an adult at the wages and other conditions fixed for boys. 136 special contracts have been approved.

In regard to the provision in technical schools of supplementary training of apprentices considerable progress has been made. While 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, the contrary opinion is now found. 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, no doubt, 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.

In the Government Service two Departments have taken steps to improve the quality of the work of their apprentices. The Railway Department has introduced a comprehensive scheme for the technical training of apprentices in the railway workshops in the four main centres, and the Public Works Department has also inserted a clause in the indenture papers of apprentices in all the trades carried on in that Department, with the object of ensuring that the boys shall attend technical colleges or some similar institutions for at least three years of their apprenticeship.

The Registrar and District Registrars are vested with authority to take proceedings for breaches of the Act, regulations, orders, &c. There have been eighty prosecutions, of which eight have been against apprentices. Of the prosecutions taken against apprentices six were for failing to attend the technical schools when ordered to do so by the committees, and two were for leaving their employment. In six cases fines were imposed, while two cases, one for leaving the employment and the other failing to attend technical school, were withdrawn on the boys undertaking to fulfil their obligations in future.

An interesting attempt to evade the provisions of the Act occurred during the year in Wellington, where an employer in the furniture trade applied to the committee to register a contract of apprenticeship. The committee refused the application, on the ground that the employer did not have adequate facilities for training an apprentice. The employer subsequently entered into a deed of partnership with the apprentice. The employer was proceeded against, the Court giving judgment for the Department.

ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £5,885 11s. 6d. 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 £5,134 12s. 5d. were paid by employers, at the instance of the Inspectors, directly to the workers concerned: total, £11,020 3s. 11d. (previous year, £8,966 1s. 11d.).

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

Sixty cases were heard and determined by the Court of Arbitration. One case heard by the Supreme Court calls for comment as follows (this relates to the fatal accident referred to on page 3, paragraph 11): The judgment states that the evidence showed that deceased was employed as a "slabby" at a sawmill, and that it was entirely outside the sphere of his duties to use the saw that caused his death. The deceased had never handled such a saw, and had done so for his own purposes in order to gain knowledge. The Court held that in the circumstances the employers were not liable.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

The administration of this Act has again been carried out by the Department of Agriculture, as the Inspectors of that Department have opportunities of inspecting the accommodation provided for shearers during the performance of their various duties in the country districts. The records of the work done show that during the year 1,078 inspections were made, 215 requisitions were served to provide better accommodation, and three prosecutions were taken for failing to comply with the notices served; a conviction was recorded and a fine imposed in each case.

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT (INCLUDING ACCOMMODATION FOR FLAX-MILL AND SAWMILL WORKERS).

The special Inspector appointed to supervise the accommodation provided at flax-mills, sawmills, &c., has again made a large number of general inspections of such places, and 212 requisitions have been served on proprietors for increased or improved accommodation.