

LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT, 1913.

This Act provides machinery to deal with industrial disputes not coming within the scope of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. A strike or lock-out of workers or employers may take place where there is no agreement or award in force under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act provided that a certain period—about three weeks—has been allowed for the investigation of the dispute and for a ballot on the question at issue as hereafter mentioned. Notice of the dispute must be given to the Minister of Labour, who may then refer the dispute to a Conciliation Commissioner, who calls a conference of the parties, or the Minister may appoint a Labour Disputes Committee to investigate the matter. After the expiration of fourteen days a ballot of the workers or employers, as the case may be, is conducted by the Registrar of Industrial Unions on the question whether the recommendations made for the settlement of the dispute should be accepted or on the question of striking or locking-out. After the expiration of seven days following the notification of the result of the ballot the parties may strike or lock-out. Only nine ballots have been taken under the Act since 1913, and in none of these cases did a strike take place.

The Act also provides that agreements entered into by employers or workers to whom the Act applies may be filed with the Clerk of Awards and enforced for the period of their currency as if they were industrial agreements under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act—*vide* section 8.

During the year ten agreements were filed pursuant to section 8, the agreement in each case being reached without recourse to a conference under the Act or to a Labour Disputes Committee. These agreements were as follows :—

- Westland engine-drivers, firemen, pumpmen, &c. (State coal-mines).
- New Zealand shift engineers in freezing-works.
- Auckland Electric-power Board shift engineers.
- Taranaki and Wellington shift engineers in cool stores.
- Canterbury racing-stable hands (galloping section).
- Canterbury racing-stable hands (trotting section).
- Otago and Southland cool-stores employees.
- Wellington fire-brigade officers.
- Sandfords Ltd. (Auckland) engineers.
- Gisborne shift engineers in freezing-works.

Fourteen agreements were in force on 31st March, 1939, in the following industries :—

- Cool-storage workers (1).
- Engine-drivers, firemen, &c. (1).
- Engineers (6).
- Engineers (marine) (1)
- Fire-brigade officers (1)
- Racing-stable hands (2).
- Totalizator employees (1)
- Tow-boat employees (1)

APPRENTICES ACT.

This Act, which was passed in 1923, places the regulation of apprenticeships under the control of the Court of Arbitration. It also provides for the establishment of Committees representative of employers and workers; these have such powers as may be delegated to them by the Court.

The Committees, of which there are ninety-eight, operate mainly in the chief centres, and there is usually one Committee for each industry. Taking the Dominion as a whole, there is a lack of interest shown by employers and workers alike concerning the provisions of the Act relating to the work of Apprenticeship Committees. It might be regarded as an unwise policy to give to any Committee too large an area to control, on account of the difficulties of travelling and the fact that the positions on Committees are honorary. However, taking the eighteen districts into which the Dominion is divided and a District Registrar of Apprentices—*viz.*, the Inspector of Factories—is appointed there should be 320 Apprenticeship Committees established if the law is to function equally throughout the Dominion. At the present time the District Registrar is empowered to act where there is no Apprenticeship Committee. Among the Committees that are functioning a keen interest is displayed in the duties assigned to them by the Court of Arbitration.

The Department has made available to Committees the services of some of its experienced officers, who undertake inquiry work and in many cases act in a secretarial capacity. These officers made 187 special inspections under this Act during 1938-39. In addition, inspections were carried out in the course of ordinary inspection and investigation work and while visiting factories, &c., in connection with other duties.

Complaints were received regarding 237 alleged breaches of the Act, while 363 other breaches were discovered by the Department's Inspectors, 382 warnings being issued.

There were thirty prosecutions during the year for various breaches of the Act and the orders made thereunder, convictions being entered in all cases, and penalties amounting to £48 5s. being imposed. With nine exceptions, the prosecutions were against employers.

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 and includes special contracts under section 7 of the Statutes Amendment Act, 1936.