deemed within the meaning of section 22 of "The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1894."

Furniture Trade Union.—A trade-union of those engaged in the furniture trade had been formed in Dunedin, the workmen being urged thereto by the low wages made, and the introduction of an undue proportion of boy-labour. The union endeavoured to arrange prices, &c., with employers, and for that purpose a conference was held in December, 1896. An agreement was adopted, the main points being that 8s. per day was to be the minimum wage; piecework to be paid for at a certain "log" price, any reductions for machinery to be settled between employers and employés: all overtime to be paid time and a quarter, and piecework overtime 3d. per hour above stated prices; for the future only one apprentice to every three journeymen to be employed, but no alteration of existing apprenticeship. This agreement, however, was not signed by all the firms engaged in the trade, and, as some of these firms were among the larger employers of labour, reference was made by the union to the Conciliation Board. It transpired during the hearing of the evidence by the Board that few employers were really opposed to the wishes of the union; it was generally on some matter of detail or practice that objection was made. However, those employers who had refused to sign the agreement held a meeting, at which resolutions were passed to the effect that the wages asked for by the union should in future be paid; that the "log" should be objected to as unfair, on the ground that it was framed on too high a basis, and that certain amendments should be proposed in regard to boy-labour and machinery. These resolutions were laid before the Conciliation Board, and that body, having very patiently and exhaustively heard argument and evidence for both sides, concluded to recommend that the agreement be amended in the following particulars: That the reductions on account of machinery were not to exceed 20 per cent. of "log" prices; and that the clause relating to the number of apprentices should be altered so that those now in work should not be excepted from the three-to-one ratio of journeymen and apprentices. If any employer had apprentices in excess of this ratio, he might retain them by paying them "log" prices. The agreement was acceded to, and became law, but only for the current year, as in that time it is calculated that the value or otherwise of the provisions therein will probably be ascertained.

Before leaving the consideration of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, I would respectfully offer the following suggestions for future amendment:—

1. When the whole Board of Conciliation is unanimous—that is to say, when the employers' representatives, the workers' representatives, and the Chairman all agree that certain things should be done—the Board should have the same power as the higher Court to make its award binding on both parties. In some cases at present the time of members of the Board is wasted, because the intention of the litigants is to take the case to the Court of Arbitration under any circumstances, in order that the award may have the force of law. This is an injustice to the Board, and a waste of public money.

2. If a member of a Board of Conciliation leaves the district to reside permanently elsewhere, he should resign his seat on the Board. If he resides permanently elsewhere when elected he should be disqualified. The Act does not contemplate the great expense of non-resident members of Boards travelling long distances in order to attend sittings, and thereby largely increasing the cost of industrial legislation.

The State Farm, Levin.

This farm has been considerably developed during the year, and is becoming a very valuable Government property. Particulars concerning it may be found in the report of Mr. J. Mackay, printed herewith.

The farm, however, has ceased to fulfil its function as a reservoir for surplus labour. It has arrived at a condition of cultivation when no variety of rough employment can be there supplied to which an untrained or inexpert labourer can be set to work under co-operative contract. The Government, after considering the circumstances of the case, was pleased to grant the department an outlet for surplus labour by providing a section of some 3,000 acres at Taihape, on the Marton–Taupo Road, for the purpose. As the pressure on the department to provide occupation for the "unemployed" is greatest during the winter months, the Taihape section being forest land, allows of many men being placed thereon to fell and clear the bush, this being winter work. The land itself has not been transferred to the Labour Department, but remains Crown lands, and when cleared will be put into the open market in the usual course. It is proving to be a valuable and efficient outlet for surplus labour, so far as the stronger class of unemployed workmen is concerned, and in view of the needs of labour in the North Island.

Workmen's Homes.

In regard to pieces of land suitable for workmen's homes, and to be taken under "The Land for Settlements Act Amendment Act, 1896," it was hoped that sections in the outskirts or suburbs of the larger towns could be acquired, on which workmen could erect houses, make gardens, &c., the men being conveyed into the cities by cheap-running "workmen's trains." Before this can be done to advantage it is necessary that the definition of "prescribed maximum" in section 2 of "The Land for Settlements Act, 1894," should be amended. At present this section prescribes that 500 acres is the "prescribed maximum" for land within five miles of the cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. As no land can be compulsorily resumed on payment by the Government unless above this maximum, it virtually becomes impossible to find properties suitable for cutting into garden allotments if 500 acres in a single block remains as the smallest area available for acquisition, since there are few properties of that extent to be found in close proximity to the large towns.