

(f) SHORTAGES OF LABOUR

Delays to shipping were experienced during the year through shortages of waterside labour, and steps were taken to increase the membership of branches at the ports of Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, Napier, and New Plymouth. It is expected that the increased membership will overcome any further major delays to shipping on this account. There is a shortage of deckmen at the ports of Auckland and Wellington, and efforts are being made to obtain men to undertake this work.

(g) SPELLING

The position regarding "spelling" or the taking of unreasonable rest periods has not materially altered during the year and still remains a problem to be overcome on the waterfront, particularly at the ports of Auckland, Wellington, and Lyttelton. During the year, shipping companies, who are responsible for the supervision of waterside labour, took steps to remedy the position. While an improvement was brought about at that time, it has not been maintained. As indicated in previous reports, the Commission agrees that workers performing manual labour are entitled to reasonable rest periods, but the present system of "spelling" is not in the interests of the workers themselves or the industry as a whole.

(h) LOSS OF MAN-HOURS ON THE WATERFRONT

Tables are included in the Appendix to illustrate the principal losses of man-hours on the waterfront. While the most direct cause of such losses is disputes involving stoppages of wages, the greatest losses are from indirect causes—namely, depletion of the regular labour force through accidents, involving the payment of compensation, and absences on account of sickness, penalties, and other causes. The information regarding accidents and absences is compiled from unionists' annual holiday cards, which record days on compensation up to a maximum of 144 days (24 weeks) and days of sickness, where the worker is absent for 6 consecutive days or more, up to 72 days (12 weeks) in each leave year ending 31st July. This is the only information of this nature readily available.

(i) DISPUTES INVOLVING STOPPAGES OF WORK (Appendix, page 74)

The man-hours lost on the waterfront through disputes during the year ended 31st March, 1950 (591,624), were more than double those lost on this account during the year ended 31st March, 1949 (294,616). For 1949-50 the percentage of man-hours lost to total man-hours worked rose to 3.83, as compared with 2.25 during 1948-49. One dispute, the "Barnhill" and "overtime ban," accounted for almost 75 per cent. of the man-hours lost. This dispute started at Auckland on 27th June, 1949, and spread to most other ports between 18th and 26th July, 1949. It was not terminated until 18th August, 1949. Except for the final week at Auckland, there was no complete stoppage of work during this dispute. The union refused overtime work on week-nights, Mondays to Fridays. This is reflected in the higher total of wages lost in proportion to man-hours lost for 1949-50 as compared with 1948-49.

Once again the Port of Auckland stands out pre-eminent as the principal source of stoppages of work on the waterfront. The totals for Auckland, both for man-hours and wages lost, account for over 55 per cent. of the totals for all ports. The wages lost at Auckland through disputes are equal to 4¼d. per hour for each man-hour worked during 1949-50, which, on the average of forty-six hours per man-week worked, is equivalent to 16s. 3½d. per worker per week. For all ports the corresponding averages are 2.45d. per hour and 9s. 1½d. per worker per week.