

case. It gave rise to a very interesting decision, which is to be found in Book of Awards, Vol. ix, p. 224. A signwriter and embosser, considering himself an artist and not an artisan, declined to join the Painters' Union as directed by the award. The Court held that the signwriter had committed a breach of award by refusing to join the union, but would not inflict a penalty if the respondent applied for membership therein within fourteen days.

A unique proceeding under the Arbitration Act took place through the appointment of a special Board of Conciliation under section 51 of the main Act to investigate a dispute brought forward by the Auckland Slaughtermen's Employees' Union. The Board sat at Auckland in July, 1907, with Mr. Arthur Myers, Mayor of Auckland, as Chairman. The recommendations of the Board were made binding as an industrial agreement (Book of Awards, Vol. viii, p. 443).

Cases relating to deduction from wages for time lost, holidays, &c., may be found by those interested, in Book of Awards, Vol. viii, pp. 252, 613, 916, 1045, 1046, and 1106.

The annual return of membership of all industrial unions as at 31st December last is embodied in a separate parliamentary paper. For the last three years the membership of employers and workers was as follows:—

	Unions of Employers.		Unions of Workers.	
	Number of Unions.	Number of Members.	Number of Unions.	Number of Members.
December, 1905	113	3,276	261	29,869
.. 1906	109	3,337	274	34,978
.. 1907	121	3,630	310	45,614

This shows an increase of twelve employers' unions, with an additional membership of 293, and an increase of thirty-six workers' unions, with 10,636 added members during the year.

It will be noted from the figures that the increase of the membership of workers' unions for the year ending 31st December is greater than for the previous years. If the discontent with the Arbitration Act is as widespread and deep as some persons allege this phenomenal increase in the membership of the workers' unions seems difficult to explain.

An interesting comparison is afforded by a study of the following table, in which I have grouped the number of members in industrial unions according to the several branches of industry: *i.e.*, Agriculture, building, clothing, and textile, engineering and shipbuilding, food, mining, printing, transport, and miscellaneous small trades difficult to classify under the several headings. The unions given under the heading "Transport" include, for instance: Cabmen, carriers, drivers, railway servants, seamen, tramway employees, wharf-labourers, &c.

The following table shows the number of unionists employed in various trades during the years ended 1903 and 1907 (inclusive):—

Trade.	1903.	1907.	Increase per Cent.
Agriculture	1,235	2,999	142.8
Building	3,717	6,572	76.8
Clothing and textile	3,158	3,679	16.5
Engineering and shipbuilding	1,441	1,975	37.0
Food	2,297	4,377	90.5
Mining	4,145	5,642	36.1
Printing	708	1,038	46.6
Transport	7,749	13,864	78.9
Other trades	3,190	5,468	70.4
Total	27,640	45,614	..
Average increase of all unions	65.0

The growth of the various unions has been persistent and steady; the greatest increases being gained by the building, food, agricultural, and transport industries.

The number of cases taken under the Act by the Department was considerably larger this year than last; a total of 754 cases for breaches of award being taken before the Court, as against 406 last year. Of the cases taken, 577 were decided in favour of the Department, seventy-two were dismissed, and 105 withdrawn. The number of cases withdrawn will, no doubt, appear excessive, but a large number were dealt with in this way in Wellington alone, owing to the Arbitration Court's decision as to the invalidity of the Cooks and Waiters' agreement.