

*Industrial Disturbances.*

There was a total of twenty-seven industrial disputes during the year. Several of these were of a trivial nature, involving the cessation of work by a number of men for a few hours or minutes, or refusal to work certain overtime. In twelve instances it was found necessary to institute proceedings for breaches of the War Regulations, Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, &c. The following is a short statement of the more serious industrial difficulties that required attention during the period:—

*Coal-miners.*—There was considerable unrest amongst all the miners of the Dominion, and cessations of work (lasting from two days to two months) were more or less frequent, especially in the latter part of 1917. The mines were idle on several occasions, the more important cases being—(1.) A dispute arose because of the refusal of a man to work a certain horse and of his subsequent dismissal. A settlement was effected by the re-employment of this driver at surface work. No proceedings were taken. (2.) The West Coast miners also struck work as a protest against the Military Service Act, but after a visit by Cabinet Ministers decided to return to work. Many districts were affected by these disputes, particularly the Nelson, Westland, and Auckland Provinces. Nine officials of the Coal-miners' Federation, which represents practically all the coal-miners of New Zealand, were proceeded against under the War Regulations for encouraging the continuance of a seditious strike, and seven of them were sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, and two to three months'.

*Wellington Gasworks (Retort-house) Employees.*—The retort-house employees addressed their foreman with a view of securing better wages and working conditions, and on this being refused gave fourteen days' notice and left their employment. After a month's idleness, during which other men filled the strikers' places, the original workmen were reinstated, and on being prosecuted under the War Regulations for taking part in an unlawful strike they were each fined £5.

*Flax-millers (Manawatu).*—Eighty men were on strike for fourteen days because of a dispute concerning wages. Work was resumed on an undertaking being given by the employers to reduce the rate of board charged to the men. A number of them were prosecuted under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act for taking part in an unlawful strike, and fines of £1 were inflicted in twenty-four cases, and the other cases were dismissed, the Magistrate holding that, as paddockers were contractors, they were not "workers" within the meaning of the Act. One man was fined £10, he being considered the ringleader in the trouble.

*Freezing-chamber Hands (Gisborne).*—The duration of this strike was only two days. The union did not approve of the men's action, and assisted the employers to secure other men, with the result that the strikers returned to work immediately. Eleven men—viz., those who were members of the union—were prosecuted under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and a fine of £3 was imposed on each; the remainder were prosecuted under the War Regulations, and a similar fine was imposed in each case.

*Slaughtermen (Wanganui).*—Seventeen slaughtermen refused to work until two non-unionists were dismissed. This was done and work resumed. The men were proceeded against under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and in eleven cases a fine of £5 each was imposed; in the remaining cases, in which the men concerned had been engaged to commence work the same day, but had not actually started, the Inspector was nonsuited.

*Seamen and Firemen.*—The "mosquito fleet" at Wellington and other ports was held up for about six weeks owing to the refusal of the seamen to sail with less than two men in a watch. The matter in dispute was referred to the Arbitration Court for interpretation, and the decision being adverse to the claims of the men they returned to their employment. Two of the union officials were prosecuted under the War Regulations for inciting a seditious strike, and were sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

*Miners (Blackball).*—The proceedings referred to last year as being taken against the Blackball miners for striking resulted in the union being fined £1 and each striker 1s., the Department agreeing, on account of the promise of the men to avoid further trouble, to ask for a nominal penalty.

Other disturbances of minor importance have been reported during the year, affecting such workers as wharf labourers, tunnel-workers (Otira), certain female assistants in the employ of the Colonial Ammunition Company, the Borough Council employees at Eltham, Thames engineers, and the Dunedin and Port Chalmers engineers, who refused to work overtime on essential troopship work.

*Expenditure of Court and Councils.*

The year's expenditure of Councils of Conciliation was £3,613, and that of the Court of Arbitration was £4,470: total, £8,083. This includes the salaries of the Conciliation Commissioners (£1,500), and of the members of the Court (£2,800).

## LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT.

No further disputes coming under this Act have arisen. The Auckland freezing-chamber hands' case, in March, 1917, mentioned in last year's report, is the only dispute so far that has been dealt with; all other disputes have come under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, the workers being registered thereunder and being bound by an award or industrial agreement.

## REGULATION OF TRADE AND COMMERCE ACT, 1914.

An application was made by the New Zealand Boot-manufacturers' Association Industrial Union of Employers for an Order in Council under section 25 of this Act to suspend during the continuance of the present war a clause of an industrial award relating to the bootmaking trade, which limited the number of apprentices to be employed in the trade.

The application was inquired into by the Judge and members of the Court of Arbitration who were, shortly after the passing of the Act, appointed to hear and report to the Governor-General upon any applications for a modification of awards. The report stated that the Commission was of the opinion that it is not necessary or desirable in the public interest or otherwise that the