

LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT, 1913.

The following information shows the extent to which the workers have preferred the method provided by the above Act for the settlement of their disputes to the procedure to be followed if they register under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act:—

Industry affected.	Particulars.	Ballot of Workers.	Nature of Settlement.
Shift engineers (in freezing-works and power-houses), Auckland	Agreement reached without recourse to a conference or to a Labour Disputes Committee	Not required ..	Agreement substantially in terms of the expired agreement filed pursuant to section 8 (1).
Shift engineers (in freezing-works and power-houses), Gisborne	Ditto	Agreement filed pursuant to section 8 (1).
Shift engineers (in freezing-works and power-houses), Canterbury	Conference called by Conciliation Commissioner reached substantial agreement. Validity of proceedings then questioned on ground that union was bound by an award	Workers' union decided to leave matter in abeyance.
Coal-miners, Hikurangi ..	Agreement reached without recourse to a conference or to a Labour Disputes Committee	Agreement substantially in terms of the expired agreement filed pursuant to section 8 (1).
.. Waikato ..	Ditto	Ditto.
Gas Company's clerical and showroom employees, Auckland	Conference called by Conciliation Commissioner agreed upon minor points. Dispute then referred to a Labour Disputes Committee. Settlement resulted	Agreement in terms of the expired agreement filed pursuant to section 8 (1).

The Act permits of strikes and lockouts taking place, provided there is no award or agreement in force, and provided that a certain period—about three weeks—has been allowed for an investigation and for a ballot on the question at issue. Only twenty-nine unions have chosen to have their disputes dealt with under the Act since its inception in 1913. There are now seventeen agreements in operation under that Act (see list below), while there are 471 awards and industrial agreements in force under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. It will be again noticed that all the disputes dealt with last year were settled without any strike taking place or a ballot being required. In eighteen instances, however, strikes of coal-miners took place on various minor questions that arose after their agreements were made; these are included in "Industrial Disturbances" (page 7). In four instances proceedings were taken for striking or for instigating and abetting the strikes, and a fine was imposed in one case; the other three were withdrawn. Arising out of the disputes filed under the Act since its inception to date only six ballots have been necessary, and in none of these cases did a strike take place in pursuance of such a ballot.

INDUSTRIES IN WHICH AGREEMENTS (NUMBERING SEVENTEEN) FILED UNDER THE LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT ARE IN OPERATION.

Chemical fertilizer and acid working.
 Coal-mining (including deputies and engine-drivers, firemen, pumpmen, &c.).
 Marine and shift engineers in freezing-works and power-houses.
 Fire-brigade service.
 Gas-manufacture (including clerical and showroom employees).
 Glass-manufacture.
 Tramway and omnibus services.

APPRENTICES AND BOYS LEAVING SCHOOL.

The purposes of the Apprentices Act, 1923, are twofold—(1) to steer a fair proportion of the boys leaving school into the skilled occupations, and (2) to ensure the more adequate training of apprentices therein. Regarding the first, complaints had been made for many years that too large a proportion of the boys leaving school entered either the non-productive professional and commercial callings on the one hand, or the "blind alley" unskilled occupations on the other, leaving the more important primary and secondary industries with an insufficient supply.

EMPLOYMENT FOR BOYS LEAVING SCHOOL.

The Act, therefore, provides that in order that every encouragement and assistance should be given to boys to proceed to skilled callings, reports on the boys leaving schools should be forwarded by head teachers to the Department, which would then get into touch with the boys and their parents, inviting