

The Act permits of strikes and lockouts taking place 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 fourteen agreements in operation under that Act (see list below), while there are 468 awards and industrial agreements in force under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. It will be noticed that all the disputes dealt with last year were settled without any strike taking place or a ballot being required. In twenty-one 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). 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 FOURTEEN) FILED UNDER THE LABOUR DISPUTES INVESTIGATION ACT ARE IN OPERATION.

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

APPRENTICES ACT.

This Act, which was passed in 1923, places the regulation of apprenticeships in the control of the Court of Arbitration. It also provides for the establishment of committees representative of employers and workers; these have such powers as may be delegated to them by the Court.

Since the Act came into operation 137 committees have been set up, but of these at least seven are not now functioning. As may be expected the committees are chiefly to be found in the main towns, and there is usually one for each industry.

During 1929–30 the Department again made available to committees the services of some of its experienced officers, who undertook inquiry work and in many cases acted in a secretarial capacity. These officers made 5,499 inspections under this Act during the year, the inspections being carried out chiefly in the course of ordinary inspection and investigation work and while visiting factories, &c., in connection with other duties.

Complaints were received regarding 345 breaches of the Act while 275 other breaches were discovered by the Department's inspectors, 443 warnings being issued.

There were 33 prosecutions during the year for various breaches of the Act and the orders made thereunder, convictions being entered in 31 of the cases, and fines amounting to £50 being imposed. Of the prosecutions 24 were against employers and 9 against apprentices.

Inquiries have been made regarding the number of apprentices in those trades to which the Act applies and the information is summarized hereunder.

RETURN SHOWING NUMBER OF APPRENTICES EMPLOYED IN SKILLED TRADES, APRIL, 1930.

Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.	Trade.	Number of Apprentices employed.
Baking ..	374	Cycle-working ..	85	Painting ..	424
Boatbuilding ..	50	Electrical ..	702	Plumbing ..	721
Boilermaking ..	79	Engineering ..	1,017	Plastering ..	216
Bootmaking ..	205	Motor-engineering ..	1,315	Printing ..	756
Boot-repairing ..	89	Furniture ..	706	Saddlery ..	37
Blacksmithing ..	51	Gardening ..	23	Sail, tent, &c. ..	4
Bricklaying ..	78	Hairdressing ..	189	Tailoring ..	51
Carpentering ..	1,509	Hat-making ..	4	Tinsmithing ..	170
Chemistry ..	162	Jewellery ..	71	Wicker-working ..	41
Clothing ..	77	Leadlight ..	59		
Coachbuilding ..	383	Masonry ..	39	Total ..	9,826
Coopering ..	10	Moulding ..	129		

CONFERENCE OF APPRENTICESHIP COMMITTEES.

The report of this conference, which was referred to in the previous report of the Department, was duly presented to Parliament as H.—11A. The conference asked that a Bill be introduced to carry into effect those items mentioned in the report upon which agreement was reached. A Bill was accordingly brought down last session but was not proceeded with. It is anticipated that it will be again introduced during this session.

ARREARS OF WAGES.

Amounts totalling £9,620 8s. 9d. were collected by the Department's officers on behalf of workers who had been underpaid the wages prescribed by awards and the various Acts, while further amounts of such arrears, totalling £3,722 15s. 5d., were paid by employers, at the instance of the Inspectors, directly to the workers concerned: total £13,343 4s. 2d. (previous year, £14,024 0s. 9d.).