

built their new factories in Lyttelton. Generally they find that, as well as having their supply of labour assured, the extra freight costs incurred are more than balanced by the low cost of land and rates.

The Lyttelton waterfront has been working under the bureau system of engaging labour for nine years now. It was the first port in New Zealand to adopt the system. "And," the bureau manager said, "the men wouldn't like to go back to the old way again." Under the old system, foremen of the various shipping companies stood on a small platform or block with the men awaiting employment before them and nominated those they required to work their own ships. The trouble with this "auction block" system, as it was called, was that each company tended to give preference to a certain group of men. It engaged the same men first all the time and employed others only when the preferred group were all at work. This meant very often the available work on the waterfront was not evenly shared; and that's what the bureau system tries to avoid.

The system was introduced to equalize hours—not wages. To equalize wages would be practically impossible, since there are twenty-four different kinds of work on the waterfront, paid for at varying rates. The members of the union nominate the classes of work they are willing to do. They may nominate only one or two of the twenty-four kinds or most of them; and only on the kinds of work they nominate are they employed.

The shipping companies tell the bureau the number of men required for each of their ships arriving in the port, and the bureau allocates them so that, as far as possible, the hours of work over a four-weekly period are equal. When there is a shortage of labour and there are overseas ships, particularly food ships, waiting, gangs of men may be transferred direct from one ship to another. And it is when this happens that it is hardest to keep the hours of all the men on approximately the same level. But the bureau seems to manage it all right.

"A" Grade union members, physically fit men who can do most kinds of work on the waterfront, are guaranteed

a wage of £3 6s. a week. Slack times are perhaps not as frequent as they were before the war, but they still occur, as they did in Lyttelton just after Christmas, when wages had to be made up to the guaranteed minimum.

Though managed separately, the bureau is responsible to the Waterfront Controller, who is also the final authority in local waterfront disputes. The watersiders have a disputes committee of their own which first tries to settle any differences which may arise with the employers. If it is not successful, the dispute goes on to the Waterfront Controller. The system seems to work all right, for in the last ten years not more than three disputes on the Lyttelton waterfront have ended in stoppages of work.

The union also has its own disciplinary committee, which beside having power to deal with any members who break union rules and regulations, is doing what it can to put down pillaging of cargo. There is at least one case on record where a man, fined for this offence, was expelled from the union.

Outside the Waterside Workers' Union, the largest groups of workers are with the Railways Department, the Borough Council, the Harbour Board, and Anderson's foundry, down by the tunnel mouth. The foundry employs 110 men, but the manager said he could use 150 if he could get them. He thought, however, his staff was likely to be reduced rather than expanded. Eighteen of his skilled tradesmen were due to enter the Army with the call-up of men from industry for the replacement scheme, and if they went he said he'd have to pay off about 40 men and stop work on certain jobs. He was not complaining about it; only giving an instance of some of the wartime difficulties facing manufacturers.

This factory has been working fifty hours a week for the last eighteen months. In the early days of the war it tried up to one hundred hours, but found it couldn't work more than fifty and at the same time keep the accident and sickness rate at a reasonable level. Fifty hours' work means fifty-five hours' pay, which is 37½ per cent. above the award rate. "And," said the manager, "the lower-paid workers need it these days to live."