

(48.) DUNEDIN TAILORESSES.

In the matter of "The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1894"; and in the matter of two references filed in connection with a dispute between the New Zealand Federated Tailoresses and other Clothing-trades Employés' Union and the New Zealand Clothing-manufacturers' Association.

The Conciliation Board for the Industrial District of Otago and Southland, having received the necessary proofs establishing its jurisdiction, specially reports as follows:—

1. This is a renewed reference involving the same questions as were involved in a previous reference to which the Board requests the attention of the Court.

2. The first references were filed on the 27th day of June and the 4th day of July, 1899, and were first dealt with together by the Board at a sitting which lasted two days, on the 17th and 18th days of July, 1899.

3. The matter was then adjourned, and was further heard on the 1st and 2nd days of November, 1899, and reported upon on the 8th day of November, 1899.

4. A great deal of evidence was taken, and the Board is satisfied that, having this evidence still before it, no good end could be attained by taking it over again.

5. It has appeared to the Board throughout the proceedings that there is practically no dispute between the parties, though there may be some questions of detail into which the Board has not entered in view of greater difficulties with which it has found itself unable to deal. Were it a question of settling matters of detail, the Board has no reason to doubt that the parties themselves would settle them, as the Board has found that the very best relations between employers and employés exist in the district.

6. The real question, however, is of a different kind. The employers inform the Board that they are quite willing to pay the rate of remuneration asked by the employés, provided the same rate is fixed for other parts of the colony; they further say that if the rates now prevailing at Auckland continue to prevail they must

either lower wages to those rates or cease manufacturing certain lines. The striking difference between these rates is illustrated by a comparison between the Auckland log and that in force in Dunedin and other southern cities.

7. The Board does not find that this assertion of the employers has been fully answered, though some evidence has been given tending to show that in some cases the work required to be done in producing a given named garment in Auckland is less than is required by employes in Dunedin for a garment nominally the same. The Board, however, has no reason to think that, having regard to the cost of living and to the general rate of remuneration of women prevailing in Dunedin, the present rates are too high, nor has any such assertion been put forward by employers.

8. The question thus developed is one of competition between two parts of the colony—viz., Auckland on the one hand, and Dunedin, Christchurch, and Wellington on the other.

9. The object of the long adjournment of the former reference was to ascertain whether a uniform rate of wages could be brought about. Finding, however, that Government did not propose promoting legislation on the subject, the Board made a recommendation, which was adopted, that the parties should carry on under the existing system until the Auckland agreement, which was a private one, expired. As this agreement has been renewed, a fresh reference has been filed with which the Board is not in a position to deal, as it does not consider that it is constituted to settle questions of competition between localities. Nor is it within the province of the Board to offer any opinion as to the desirability of having legislation on the subject.

10. The Board accordingly reports that it has failed to bring about a settlement of the dispute satisfactory to the parties.

Dated this 15th day of June, 1900.

FREDK. CHAPMAN, Chairman.