

this Act, and especially regarding the protection it affords in assuring the labourer of his earnings. In trades there has been no demand but what the local supply could amply meet. The building trade, though it has been somewhat brisk, has been found fully supplied with all local requirements.

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

I have, &c.,

Hy. McKAY, Agent.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st May, 1893.

I have the honour to report as follows on the working of the Factories and Shops and Shop-assistants Acts in the Wellington and other districts over which I have jurisdiction; also, in re the working of the department in regard to labour matters generally:—

FACTORIES.

During the last twelve months great improvements have been effected in Wellington in many of the factories and workrooms, those improvements in many cases costing fairly large sums of money. Many employers objected at the time to make such improvements; but time has taught them that the money has not been thrown away, as they now cheerfully admit that the health of their employes is better, and that, consequently, there is less lost time than formerly, while they, having more air and light, do more work. There have been few evasions of the law, only two cases in Wellington having been brought into Court during the last year—viz., one for non-registration, and one for employing females during prohibited hours—in both cases verdicts being given for the Inspector. During the year 250 permits have been issued to young persons under sixteen, in accordance with clause 53. In issuing these permits I usually ask the applicant what standard he or she has passed at school. Quite two-thirds had passed the Fifth, whilst the remainder comprise from the Third upwards. This questioning, although not required by the Act, is, in my opinion, necessary, as it gives a good idea of the standard of education reached by those who are compelled to work at an early age. In no case was there a boy or girl who could not sign his or her name in a clear and legible manner.

During the months of November and December tailoresses and dressmakers are as a rule very busy preparing summer goods, and, as a consequence, most of the houses employing this class of labour worked overtime, permission being granted in accordance with clause 51. In regard to the overtime section of this clause, I have to thank employers for giving me access (in many cases unasked) to their books showing rate of overtime paid.

Steam-laundries, depending, as many of them do, on the washing from the local and ocean-going steamers, have to avail themselves very frequently of the overtime clause, as vessels only stay in port for a few hours or days, and it is impossible to overtake the work otherwise.

Speaking generally, the Factories Act in Wellington has been carried out by employers and employes in a most satisfactory manner. Any grievances which have been brought under my notice have been at once rectified, and I think that most employers concede that a little inspection is required, as it has the effect of keeping employes more alive to the necessity of cleanliness, both in the work itself and in the places wherein they work.

The total number of factories registered up to the 1st April in the city and suburbs of Wellington is 226, employing a total of 2,912 persons.

SHOP AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS.

This Act, which came into force in October, 1892, has been fairly carried out, all assistants getting one half-day in the week; but the feeling among employers of labour is that it should be compulsory, as it at present compels the large warehouses to close, while others which only employ two or three assistants can remain open by giving their assistants a half-day on separate days in the week.

There has been one prosecution in this city for a breach of the Act, the employer thinking that he could bring his men back at 6 p.m. Decision was given for the Inspector.

LABOUR.

During the last year the labour market has been well supplied with men. A large number came from the other colonies, principally from Victoria and New South Wales.

During the winter months of last year we were enabled to find for a large number of men work at bushfelling for private employers, sending as many as twenty-five and thirty to one contract. On some of these the men made fairly good wages, and finished up their season very well satisfied; others again, though having equally good chances, did not do so well; consequently there was a little grumbling. This can be attributed to various causes, notably want of experience, and want of cohesion among the men themselves. Road contractors also availed themselves of the services of men forwarded by the department, and in most cases have expressed themselves satisfied with the selection made. Station-holders, farmers, and flax-millers have also been supplied with men and boys, the majority of whom have given satisfaction. In addition to those placed in actual employment, and forwarded by the department, many have availed themselves of the information possessed by the department as to the best districts to proceed to on their own account to look for work, notably Australians. We have had as many as twenty men in one day, possessing a few pounds of their own, and desiring no other assistance but to be informed as to the best place to which to steer. Not the least valuable part of our work has been to assist the wives and families of men who had procured work in the colony to get to their husbands, thus relieving the Benevolent and Charitable Aid Boards, and at the same time helping to give these people the chance of becoming good and prosperous settlers. We have also had many visitors from Great Britain, they