

defence of your actions, or in plain English to "compromise," because the law is not strong enough to support you in a vigorous administration of its professed principle. Therefore it is to be hoped that the proposed amendments will be of a thorough character, and will give the assistants the help they so much need—viz., the shortening of their hours of work, which in the present Act are unnecessarily long.

*Payment for Overtime, &c.*

I think it is cruel that men can be brought back every night in the week (except on the half-holiday) to work overtime, and not be paid for it. During the year 225 persons—i.e., women and males under eighteen years of age—worked 3,762 hours' overtime. It is worthy of notice that five establishments obtained permits for 137 persons who worked 3,022 hours of the above total, leaving the balance to the whole city. You will therefore see that the overtime evil is not general, but is confined to a few establishments.

*Legal Decisions.*

There were only four cases during the year. Two were under the sanitary clauses of the Act, and convictions were obtained in each case.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act is working exceedingly well. I have not received a single report of abuse during the year. There are seventeen offices registered this year, against ten for last year. Every care is taken to see that applicants for licenses are suitable for the position.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

During the shearing season I visited the sheds in this district, and later on visited the sheds in the inland Patea district. Reports on each case have already been submitted to you, and in all cases where you thought necessary notices for the requisite buildings and improvements have been served on the station-owners.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I have to thank all with whom I have come into contact for their uniform courtesy and consideration.

I have, &c.,

JAMES SHANAGHAN, Inspector of Factories.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 18th April, 1900.

I have the honour to report that during the year ending the 31st March, 1900, I have inspected shops, factories, and workrooms of this colony where women are employed. I am pleased to state that I found the condition of these places generally very good. It is very satisfactory indeed to notice the constant improvement of these places.

Every line of business in which women are employed has been kept pretty busy all the year. Some have been very brisk all the time—in fact, scarcity of workers has been the cry everywhere. The match industry especially has been very much hampered for want of more workers.

I would still urge that the same restrictions which now apply to European laundry-workers should also apply to Chinese laundry-workers.

The question of forty-eight hours per week, to which I referred in my last annual report, is still a matter of bitter complaint among workers. In many workrooms half an hour only is given for lunch, while workers living close to their places of business, and wishing to go to their homes for their mid-day meal, find they cannot do so in the time allowed. If they take an hour in the middle of the day they are compelled to work half an hour later in the evening to make up the forty-eight hours.

"The Employment of Boys or Girls without Payment Prevention Act, 1899," is a highly commendable measure, and it is thoroughly appreciated by the young workers of the colony who have benefited so much by it. Sections 5 and 6 are of the greatest importance, and should include all workers coming under the Shops and Factories Acts, irrespective of age.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

These Acts are working more smoothly each year. A regular hour for closing is still the great essential. Women and girls employed in shops work much harder than most people imagine. I know many of them who when tea-time comes are quite done-up and not fit for another hour and a half's work. Standing on their feet all day, as most shop-girls do, is very exhausting; but in any case eight hours a day is quite long enough. Moreover, the system which exists in some of the large towns of putting assistants on in batches and making them work till all hours at night makes the duties of Inspectors doubly difficult. I find that during the winter season many shop-assistants in the smaller shops suffer very much from draughts through open doors, &c. It would be well if this were remedied, and wherever possible swinging-doors be fitted, such as are commonly used in larger shops.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act has worked very well during the year. A few complaints were made to me, but on investigation I found that in each case it was the girl who was in error, and not the office-keeper—for instance, a girl will engage to go to a certain situation, and will pay her fee to the office-keeper, but if during the next day or so she happens to hear of something which she thinks might suit her better, she takes it regardless of the previous engagement, and quite expects that the office-keeper